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Rebecca Lawrence

Lusk,  
Marden.





William E. Schurt.

City & Son, London, W.C.

# Strength in Weakness;

OR,

EARLY CHASTENED, EARLY BLESSED.

A BRIEF MEMOIR

OF

WILLIAM GELDART.

BY

MRS. GELDART,

AUTHOR OF "SUNDAY THOUGHTS," ETC

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart."—Ps. cxix. 11.

Third Edition.

SEELEY, JACKSON, AND HALLIDAY, FLEET STREET.  
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## PREFACE.

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IN sending forth to the world the records of Willy's life, with its trials and conflicts, the Editor feels constrained to anticipate, in the very first page, the fear expressed by the boy himself, when scarcely a day's march from his home. Observing the occasional recourse which his mother had to the pencil, whilst writing down some of his remarks lest sorrow or care should dim the memory of them in her heart, he naturally inquired the reason of her employment. The knowledge of his sensitiveness to observation, his retiring and somewhat reserved disposition, made her hesitate, but overcoming the feeling, she at once asked if it would be painful to him to have an account of his short life given to others, some of whom might be similarly afflicted, either in body or mind. The reply left her at full liberty; but, the warning of the dying child it has been no easy task at all times to bear in mind. His fear was, lest in

any such publication that should be ascribed to the disciple which alone belongs to the Master. Some remarks, expressed on a different subject, will illustrate his own simple views of the matter. When speaking of the propriety, or otherwise, of helps to devotion, and other things, controverted at the present day, he remarked, "Nothing can be safe or lawful which hides Jesus from His people, or in any way comes between Him and them."

How much truth there is in these few words, we have but to ask our own hearts, to find an appropriate reply. There is a constant tendency, in fact, whether it be in an act of devotion, a deed of charity, or of self-denial, to slip away from the straight path of confession, that in us, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Yes, the same spirit which influenced the Syrian of old to seek the waters of Abana and Pharpar, cleaves to us as his leprosy. It follows us in every household path, magnifying our duties, ill performed at best into something meritorious; it touches all our alms-deeds; maybe, mingles with the simple cup of water; it stands at our side as a bad angel; when we enter the courts of the Lord, it rises up to contradict the very words of our lips, "There is no health in us." Nay, who can deny that it is near us in our approaches to that blessed communion, where the sin and helplessness of the world lying in wickedness is proclaimed by

the emblems of the broken body and the shed blood ; and, stranger still, as the pen of the memorialist traces the records of those who have entered into rest, by the one, the only way, it comes as a cloud sometimes to dim the view of Christ, and is the veil which " hides Him from His people."

If the writer has found it needful, again and again, to recur to first principles in the course of this little narrative, so must the reader in his perusal of its pages. He must remember the great fact, that Willy was a frail, sinful child ; born in sin, an inheritor by nature of neither holiness nor grace. Not suddenly nor completely was the work of God's Spirit evidenced in him. Even after he had experienced the blessedness of the new birth, had known what it was to pass from death unto life ; sin, though it reigned no more, was not prepared to give him up without many a fearful struggle. It was dethroned indeed, but still an unquiet rebel within, and waged a warfare against the Spirit, of which he was not unconscious ; sending him often, as he himself acknowledged with shame and grief, to the foot of the cross. " But," to use his own words, in allusion to the sense of sin, " we know that when we really get there we can get no further ; if there isn't hope there, there can be no hope anywhere." Yes, it was by looking at the Crucified One that Willy lost his burden, that he learned his best and holiest lessons,

and heard the Saviour's voice proclaim, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." There he saw truly the wages of his sin was death, but that eternal life was the gift of God. And remember, dear young reader, it was still to the foot of the cross he fled, when in the last conflict his soul cried out in agony, "I have lost sight of Jesus;" and from the cross it was that help came, when the eyes, sealed but for a moment, caught a clear sight again of Him whom his soul loved, and unloosed his tongue ere the spirit took its flight, to cry, "Thank God, I believe!"

This, then, is the legacy he leaves behind; this the end of Willy's story: not of goodness nor merit, not of patience nor courage, not of wisdom nor strong assurance, not triumphant joy, but a lesson of faith,—faith in Christ as his Saviour, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, as the source of life and peace. Better to forget all that you may read of the sufferings and struggles, the hopes and fears, of this young disciple, than the lesson conveyed in his dying words, even on the threshold of eternity, that nothing stood between him and endless misery but the crucified and risen Saviour. Believing in Christ, and Christ alone, he received the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul.

## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

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THESE brief memorials of a beloved son will lose none of their interest by the reader's knowing that she who penned them has after three years been reunited with her Willy in that "Better Land" where God wipes away all tears, and where there shall be no more death.

The yearning anticipations which often filled the mother's heart are now realised. The following lines, though written to her sister, suitably express her feelings towards her boy:—

Blessings on that happy day,  
Which saw the first drawn breath,  
When the links were wove of that bright chain,  
Which nought can break but death.

And not e'en death ; nay, by the faith  
Of those who fought and won,  
By the anchor which our souls embraced  
And ever rested on.

We know that death will but unite  
Our spirits as of yore,  
Where autumn shadows never fall,  
And spring reigns evermore.

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# STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS.

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## CHAPTER I.

**EARLY DAYS—FIRST IDEAS OF GOD—THE DARK SPOT—THE  
FIRST REAL PRAYER—REMOVAL TO LONDON—FIRST LESSON  
ON DEATH—PHYSICAL COURAGE—WILLY A SUFFERER.**

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“ Scratch the green rind of a sapling, or wantonly twist it in  
the soil,  
The scarred and crooked oak will tell of thee for centuries to  
come ;  
Even so mayst thou guide the mind to good, or lead it to the  
marrings of evil,  
For disposition is builded up by the fashioning of first im-  
pressions.”—TUPPER.

## CHAPTER I.

WILLY was the first-born of his parents, and welcomed as all first-born flowers are, less in reference to any peculiar charm or loveliness, than as heralds of the hope and joy of a time to come.

Thus it is, doubtless, that a young mother sees beauties and attractions in her first infant ; marvels of sprightliness and precocity in development which she fails to discover in his successors.

But of Willy the most partial of parents could have found nothing remarkable in childhood to record.

Personally, he was not particularly attractive ; an ordinary Saxon-faced boy, with golden hair and soft blue eyes, but an expression which told a tale of a sturdy will and a somewhat petulant temper. Self-willed and independent, he early began to fight for his way pertinaciously ; but, unlike many passionate children, was not easily brought round. He was no favourite with strangers, his manner to them being

reserved without timidity, and his brusquerie and evident disrelish of notice certainly preserved him from any injurious admiration or petting.

Well was it for Willy's character that, although the first, he was not the last born.

A mother with a young family is apt to complain now and then of her many burdens, but could she peep behind the curtain of a nursery, where, in all the gilded misery of lonely selfishness, reigns an only child, she would perceive that the one contrives to find employment for at least as many hands and heads as her five or six ; and that the practical duties of self-denial, self-control, and self-employment, are considerably harder of acquisition than in homes where favours, love, and notice, are equally distributed among the many, not centred in the one.

Willy was peculiarly sensitive to his parents' approbation, and became, through God's blessing on the gentlest of means, an obedient and tractable child, warm in attachment, but not demonstrative ; yet he won the love of those who could see beneath the crust of manner, signs of a loving, tender nature. Yet, truth to say, the nurses gave him but a sorry character ; "there was nothing loving in Master Willy." The little brother would cling to their necks and say he loved them, as he gave an unasked

kiss, and was "more winsome than Willy." All this was true, and one looks for these little endearments in sweet, innocent, trusting childhood ; yet many a time, when the voluntary embrace has been given to his parents, their hearts have felt the joyful conviction that it was given, not instinctively nor impulsively alone, but as the evidence of an overflowing and true affection.

He led in early childhood a very happy life, and few hours have been happier in the mother's history than those she passed in strolling with Willy and two younger children (one a baby in arms, the other a frail, fair-haired child of two) in an old-fashioned garden, close to the river's bank, and almost within the shadow of the fine cathedral of Norwich. But specially happy were the Sunday mornings spent there, when, taking her turn as nurse, she could enter more thoroughly into the study of each unfolding character, and could answer the many questions of the eager children, without falling into one of the absent replies which sometimes come from the lips of an over-busy mother. In this garden many a seed was sown in the soil of the young heart, and here it was that Willy especially remembered having received his first clear notion of the actual Being of a God. It was a February morning, and one of its latest days, and the

snow still lingered on the borders and hung on the old garden trees. The children walked on the only path from which the snow had been swept, and Willy asked despondently when the spring would come. His mother pointed to a few signs, scanty enough, for there was scarcely a snowdrop in flower, and no crocus had yet ventured forth. Again he asked, very earnestly, Who would put leaves on the trees? and his mother not immediately replying, he quickly added, "Oh, the carpenter!" (for he held this individual in high repute.) On its being suggested that this would be impossible, from the length of time that it would take, to say nothing of the texture of the leaves being beyond the imitation of man, he seemed struck; and on looking at the green sprout of a little crocus which the snow had partly hidden, and being told by his mother that it came from the dry bulb the gardener had put in the ground the year before, his intelligent mind at once perceived that the Unseen Hand, which had been at work during winter in the garden, must surely be the hand of no *man*, but of that great and wise Being to whom he had already been taught to say a simple prayer. He remembered, many years after, this his first dawn of faith in God, and always spoke of that Sunday-morning walk as

a very memorable one. There is, however, little to record of the religious history of his early childhood. He liked to hear Bible stories, as most children do ; but he soon showed that he preferred hearing the story in Bible words, to having it put into simpler ones, which he said spoiled all. With two or three exceptions he never was fond of tales, nor was he often interested in the religious biography of little children ; once, when he was a very little boy, asking to have “ something true ” when “ *that tale* ” was finished.

His love of truth was certainly a remarkable feature in his moral nature ; and, during the sixteen years of his life, his parents can recall but one single instance of deceit or concealment to cloud their recollections of him. It was evening, and he kept away from his mother—did not meet her eye, but seemed restless and irritable. She saw there was something wrong, and asked him if he had been naughty. He answered, “ No : ” but the colour on his cheek, and the trembling voice, told a different tale ; and on a direct question being put, he owned to having eaten fruit out of the garden that day, and other days beside ; adding, Adam-like, that the nurse ate, and often gave to him. It is a very important consideration how to treat the first lie. The

mother was disappointed and perplexed; the decidedly truthful character of the child for five years of his life, had not allowed entrance for the suspicion that the fair page should ever be defaced by such a blot. He had been gently, though not over-indulgently trained, and was as fearless and open with his parents as child could be. He had never known severity, nor was he brought up under the discipline of the rod, but rather under that of moral suasion and gentle firmness—and that *he* should deceive! It was an anxious moment, and Willy remembered to the last days of his life his shame, his horror at the sin, but not his fear of punishment. Looking up, he saw his mother in tears, and knew that his sin had caused them. The lesson was complete. She left him alone and went to pray. On her return he looked anxiously at her face, and then she prayed God, asking him to say the words after her, to forgive the great sin he had committed. They then talked of the evil which the first denial of a fault brought into the world—the death that sin had caused, even the death of Jesus, the picture of whose crucifixion had so often touched his young heart and roused his childish indignation against those who nailed Him to the Cross. He was quite melted, and said how sorry he was, and how he never



would hide another fault. Not many days before his death, when speaking of this event in his childhood, he said,—“ I have often thought about that first lie, mamma. I believe liars are generally cowards,—they are *afraid*. I think, if I had been severely punished that time I took the currants in the garden, it would not have made me more honest at heart, though it might have made me *afraid* of lying.” Then, turning to his mother tenderly,—“ Your tears saved me from becoming a liar. I saw how great the sin must be to make you so very, very sorry.” So it is that love moves to penitence, when severity and threats do but harden. The sufferings and love of Jesus, more than all the terrors of Sinai, show forth God’s hatred of sin. “ Since that time,” he remarked, “ I have, I hope, been a *true* boy : with all my faults, I have not hidden them.”

It is not hereby intended to be asserted that there is no case in which a child’s departure from the path of truth should be followed by some heavier visitation than the tears and counsels of a mother. Disposition and previous education must necessarily modify any general opinion on the subject, but it surely is a strong plea for the “ law of kindness ” that a high-spirited, wayward child of five years, could, at the age of sixteen, and on the edge of the

Border Land, tell his mother, with earnest love, that he knew no punishment could have been so effective as the sight of her tears for his sin.

Time passed on in the old house in the Close, and care and anxiety sometimes sent the mother despondently into the presence of her God. The child was not prospering as she would have had him, and there seemed even less and less disposition to listen to truths which she knew had won many a young heart to Christ, even younger in years than Willy. He said a little prayer she taught him, but it was plain that he did not pray, and the wandering eye and the weary manner too often showed that his thoughts were far away. Still, his first real prayer was not to be long delayed. His younger brother, the next in age to Willy, was attacked with a dangerous illness, which assumed so alarming an appearance, that on one memorable Sunday night his mother went to Willy's bedside, and told him, as he lay listening to the departing wheels of the doctor's carriage, that it was likely that before many days or hours he would have lost his only brother. It was a very deep love which Willy bore this brother, and marked even from his birth by the principle that the strong should help the weak. Accordingly, his right of elder-brotherhood had been used simply as the

right to protect, and perhaps fewer disputes to trouble the peace of the nursery could not have arisen between two little children so nearly of an age as they. His face flushed, and he was silent for a moment; at length he said,—“I shall ask God to make Martin well; I dare say He will.” He rose in his crib and knelt as he spoke, his mother simply suggesting the words to convey his own desire for the restoration of one so dear. It was Willy’s earliest idea of the *power* of prayer, and he always referred to it as being his first real notion that prayer could be much *use*. It was a sense of weakness, a confidence in God’s power and willingness to give what was asked—the elements, in fact, of true prayer. The little one for whom he prayed lived to cheer Willy’s after-years of suffering and sorrow, to stand beside his bed of death, and to receive some of his latest words of love, and, better still, of faith and hope in Christ.

A removal to London soon after this event, in 1847, exercised an unfavourable influence on the health of the elder child, who had hitherto given but slight anxiety for his bodily condition. The effects of the damp clay soil of Holloway, the deprivation of many out-door enjoyments, and of the garden-life at Norwich, soon manifested themselves in all

the children, but especially in Willy and his little sister; and in the autumn of 1847, he received his first lesson on the reality and solemnity of death. There is no reason to suppose, however, that this event made any strong impression on him. The little Henrietta was scarcely two years old, and her death caused but slight alteration in any habit or plan which closely concerned himself; but a trifling circumstance, which occurred a day or two before the termination of her last illness, may afford a useful hint to children who are conscious that they are not *always* unselfish and kind to those whom they ought to love and cherish.

When Willy saw the baby in her coffin, he at first seemed unmoved, and looked on in a state of quiet wonder and a little awe. At length, with a heavy sigh, he said,—“I am so glad I carried home that doll for baby. I should have been sorry now if I hadn't, because I can never do anything for her any more.”

The little incident alluded to was an objection which Willy very strongly expressed to be the bearer of this doll, bought by his mother for the dying child two days previously at a distant shop, her own hands being already full of small parcels. Love, however, overcame selfishness in this in-

stance, and certainly saved Willy from the sorrow of remorse.

Shortly after this event, a troublesome tumour, which had for some time been forming on his forehead, now rendered painful operations necessary. These he bore with a Spartan firmness—an example to children who cry grievously for a fall or a prick, and keep nurses and mothers standing over them with the tea-spoonful of medicine, that needs but a moment's endurance of a disagreeable taste to swallow. At the house of the surgeon (a friend of his parents), where the painful cutting was performed, the daughters of the family proposed going out to avoid the sound of the poor child's cries, but were persuaded to remain, and except one exclamation, there was not a sound or any effort of resistance. And not only so, but with this full experience of the pain, when a second operation had to be performed, and caustic introduced into the open wound, he walked cheerfully with his father to the doctor's house, a considerable distance from his own home.

We must pass over the period of a few months, during which his health continued to fail, notwithstanding a visit to his dear grandmamma at Clifton, and hasten to a time which may be said to commence a new and important era of Willy's life.

## CHAPTER II.

**A NEW HOME—THE TRIAL OF SICKNESS—VISIT TO BOULOGNE  
—THE TEMPTATION OF AN INVALID—SELFISHNESS—THE  
BURDEN WITHOUT THE HELP—A MEMORABLE SUNDAY  
MORNING—THE PHYSICIAN'S OPINION—THE GREAT CON-  
FLICT—THE SORROW TURNED TO BLESSING—HABITS OF  
EMPLOYMENT.**

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“ Sick or healthful, slave or free,  
Wealthy, or despised and poor—  
What is that to him or thee,  
So his love to Christ endure?  
When the shore is won at last,  
Who will count the billows past? ”—KEBLE.



## CHAPTER II.

A REMOVAL to Blackheath failed to strengthen the feeble child, and the boyish sports and plays with his brother were one by one given up. The true state of his spine, strange to say, had never struck his parents, although an old lady once remarked upon a stoop he had acquired. The medical opinion was discouraging; perfect rest and confinement to the couch enjoined; sitting up even to meals forbidden; and this not for weeks alone, but with the dreary prospect of long months before him. Such was the edict given: but both Dr. Bull, who had been useful to him in early childhood, and the surgeon, gave hopes of ultimate recovery. It was at least worth the trial, but it cost him much; few could tell how much. The daily habits all changed; the bat and ball, the hoop, and long walks on the breezy heath, laid aside. Lying in a long carriage, lent by a friend for his use, he was drawn out daily for air; but it was always



something of a punishment, and he seemed to have an unhappy power of recalling the times, when over that very path he and his brother had raced so joyously. On the whole he bore it well. Children have, happily, little power of looking far on into the future, and he entered with pleasure into the proposal of a visit to Boulogne, accompanied by his mother, with the nurse and an infant sister. But the trial had yet to be faced, not stoically as a philosopher, but humbly as a Christian child, hopefully, as one who feels that the rebukes of his Heavenly Father are sent, not in anger, but in love. Besides the immediate trial of sickness and suffering, there were many other evils which the state of the case aggravated. He became exacting, and dissatisfied with any society or care but that of his mother; indifferent to others' comfort, and fretful on slight occasions.

The mother saw the progress of the mischief, and trembled as the double evil, affecting both soul and body, which seemed to threaten her child. It was about this time that the conflict began. One Sunday morning, in April, when the French town was alive with bustle and pleasure, and gay dresses floated on the Port, on which the house was situated, nurse being absent, and the baby sleeping, Willy, after fretting at some trifling

annoyance, and making grievous complaints about the arrangement of a pillow, suddenly turned from the Bible, which was open in his mother's hand, and restlessly rolling his head, made some murmur of vexation.

His mother did not reprove him at that moment—we often put reproof to invalids in the wrong place—but she turned to him with a kiss of sympathy, and soothed him with her words, telling him out of the Book she held that the Lord loved him, and chastened him for profit; that He had something better in store for him than health or strength if he endured the sorrow meekly, as from a Father's loving hand; and that all this present trial would work for good to him if he loved God. He told her freely then of its bitterness, and asked if she had not heard him groan when, the first time he was drawn in the carriage, he had to pass his bat and ball, and think, perhaps ——. He had no need to finish; her heart had told her then, as now, that the hope of recovery was faint.

Then there was mutual confidence. They agreed henceforth to fight double-handed against the growing sins of selfishness and petulance,—she, on her part, by not gratifying unreasonable wishes or pet-

tish fancies; he, by speaking and acting as if he felt that his affection did not exempt him from the duties of self-denial and patience, and that he might practise on this sick couch gentleness, obedience, and kindness. But when she came to speak of the sympathy of Christ, and His willingness and power to help, tears rolled down his pale cheek, and he said, "I will ask Him to help me, and you must warn me and help me too."

This union of strength was very useful; it put the mother on her guard while it helped the boy, and begat between them affection of no common order—the friendship of sympathy, and of rational, instead of merely instinctive, love. Victories were now more frequent than failures. Instead of allowing his mother, as before, to follow the quick pace of the little carriage along the Port, though she might be suffering intensely from its heat, noise, and smells, while he lay in his shady place of rest, absorbed in watching the vessels and steamers, his love now seldom failed to observe the weary look and to seek a cooler spot; and now and then, contrary to former custom, he would make room for baby, that the nurse's arms might rest. But this was not always the case; miracles of self-control are not to be looked for in children. He would now and then

complain. Once especially, as he lay watching some dirty, half-clad French children, chattering their own miserable *patois*, and making sand and mud houses to their hearts' content, he said, "I wish I was that child in the blouse." An expression of surprise was the answer. "Oh, mamma, mamma," he replied, piteously, "it does seem so hard to see them play, and I lying here, perhaps never to be well or walk again."

What comfort, enduring and substantial, can one give to child or man who has not bowed his neck to the yoke—who never yet, with full purpose of heart, was willing to bend to the burden which Christ imposed? Poor Willy! his was as yet the burden without the Saviour: no wonder he quailed beneath its load. It was very sad work to watch and feel so powerless. Notwithstanding the outward improvement, his mother knew that unsanctified sorrow is gall and wormwood, and that Willy's present spirit needed to be changed ere the invalid life before him could be aught but irksome and sad. The spring-time of his life, thus suddenly merged into that of the sear and yellow leaf, could only be renewed with hope of everlasting spring grounded on the sure promises of God in Christ Jesus.

The remainder of the summer passed at Sandgate more cheerfully, and some strength was gained. He met his brothers here, and their society had its happy and healthy influence upon him. The place pleased him, and he showed no anxiety to return to his home at Blackheath until he was tempted to do so by the prospect of a means of cure, named by some who professed to have derived the greatest benefit from it. The promise appeared to inspire him with hope, and he now more often spoke of all he would do when he was a man, and should travel into distant countries.

On his return to Blackheath, the visit to Dr. A—— was paid; and one thing was learned there, namely, that although the case admitted of no hope of cure, yet under the treatment proposed his life might be rendered more natural if some means were used to enable him to sit up, or even to walk. This was conditional on the use of an artificial support to the head, which would press with considerable force on the spine and chest; but the first efforts to wear it were necessarily painful and fatiguing.

He said very little until he had left Dr. A——'s house, nor spoke until he had crossed Westminster Bridge, where his mother directed his attention to the New Houses of Parliament; but

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he scarcely noticed them. At last he said, suddenly,—

“Shall I ever walk again? What does Dr. A—— say? Shall I ever be like other boys, I mean?”

“I fear not.”

No words can tell the anguish that followed—it was a grief so violent that it had something fearful in it; but he soon grew calm, and said,—

“I cannot bear it.”

Years after, when speaking of the silent sympathy of that hour, he said,—

“Those tears of yours were my comfort, mamma. I knew then what real love was—your love to me especially; and could see how different a thing it is to be felt *for* and to be felt *with*.”

The sorrow was now seen in all its reality. The child life, its earthly hopes, its joys, its buoyancy, at an end; the dependence of infancy combined with the aspirations of sanguine youth; its weakness without its enjoyments. Who can wonder that there were tears? Soon, however, on seeing his dear governess—his most faithful friend and attendant—he brightened, and said,—

“I shall have you, dear Miss Ewing!” as, clinging to her, she bore him to his couch.

She has often since said, that his child-like love and trust in her during those early days of his trial and pain were very precious; and truly, if kind and watchful care could have saved him from suffering, they were not lacking. She was then a vigorous, healthy person, in early womanhood, with a sweet face, and mild, gentle voice and manner, especially winning to the children; and she often talked to Willy of the Good Shepherd's love, comforting and soothing him when tired or restless, guarding him from the curious notice of strangers which his affliction attracted, and never flagging in devotion to her charge. They have now met in their Father's house on high, to be no more sick or sorrowful, and to sing the praises of Him who brought them, young in years, through much tribulation, into the Saviour's presence, to go no more out for ever.

The writer scarcely remembers to have heard an angry expression escape Miss Ewing's lips during some years of intercourse, except on occasion of vulgar observation excited by the dear child's affliction. The question, "What is the matter with that child?" which brought a painful flush to *his* face, never failed to produce an indignant one on hers. Once on the Heath, when his mother was of the

party, some such inquiry was made by a lady, and Miss Ewing's reply was characteristic of her faithful devotion.

On the first opportunity she was asked,—

“What did that lady say?”

“Say?—she asked why the child didn't walk; if he couldn't walk; if he were lame; and more.”

“And your answer?”

“I told her, if he were lame, God made him so: but he was not deaf; and that I had often seen bitter tears flow from his eyes after such questions. I then added, as she did not seem angry, that I advised her not to remark on afflicted children. Such curiosity cannot comfort this child; and as to you, dear Mrs. G——, it must be agony. It is to me, I know.”

A word to the wise is sufficient. Willy was particularly sensitive to this kind of notice in his own case; but it must be remarked that he was equally so when others were concerned. When a little boy of five or six years,—long before his own illness began,—he was one day in a London omnibus when a gentleman entered, most painfully bent, and of very low stature. The child's eyes were fixed on him for a moment, but with an expressive movement, almost instantly withdrawn, and with great steady-



ness he continued to look out of the window for the distance of two miles ; until, indeed, the person was set down. On being asked if he had noticed his appearance, he answered,—“ Of course ! but it is no fault of his ; and I know, if I were so, I should not like to be stared at by anybody.”

Much of happiness yet lay within Willy's reach. The fretful longing for entire restoration being over, he began to adapt himself better to his situation. He soon discovered what he could, and what he could not, do without fatigue. A kind friend commenced teaching him music, which, in the intervals during which he was allowed to leave his couch, he found he could practise ; and he soon discovered a taste for it. Drawing and cutting out he managed at his sofa-table, and it was marvellous to see how many new gifts and tastes seemed to be given instead of the powers which were taken away. Habits of self-employment were cultivated assiduously, and the time, therefore, did not hang wearily on his hands. The temper, in consequence, was more equal ; and as, from principle, his attendants ceased to foster in him the notion that he was to be indiscriminately indulged by being the object of undivided attention, he soon caught the idea, and began to be as self-dependent as he had previously

been selfish and exacting. Of course, meanwhile, education (popularly so called) might be said to be at a stand-still, but self-culture was practised. He had become fond of reading, and few who have heard his intelligent remarks when scarcely fourteen, failed to be struck not only with the amount of practical knowledge which he possessed, but with the soundness of his judgment and conclusions.

He had little poetry in his nature, and books of imagination were, for the most part, at a discount ; but there were times when a well-chosen hymn, a verse or two of Mrs. Hemans' minor poems, and above all, of Cowper, would affect and delight him. To the poetry of the latter he was peculiarly attached, even before his heart, enlightened by the Gospel, could be said to enter into its full meaning. At a later period, indeed, I have seen his eyes fill with tears, when I read, as was often my custom on Sunday evening, a few passages from this poet of Truth. The following lines are those on which he dwelt with the greatest pleasure :—

“ All joy to the believer ! he can speak,  
Trembling yet happy, confident yet meek.  
Since the dear hour, that brought me to thy foot,  
And cut up all my follies by the root,  
I never trusted in an arm but thine,  
Nor hoped but in thy righteousness divine ;

My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,  
Were but the feeble efforts of a child ;  
Howe'er performed, it was their brightest part  
That they proceeded from a grateful heart ;  
Cleansed in thine own all-purifying blood,  
Forgive their evil, and accept their good.  
I cast them at thy feet—my only plea  
Is what it was, dependence upon thee ;  
While struggling in the vale of tears below,  
That never failed, nor shall it fail me now."—*Truth.*

Some further advice was now taken from a medical man in London, of some repute, and a better-adjusted instrument was substituted for that with which he had been encumbered. Permission was given for gentle exercise ; and the limbs, which had appeared almost paralysed for want of use, were permitted moderately to try their power. So much did he improve in this respect, that he was able to undertake a long journey to the West of England with his younger brother and governess, after spending another spring at Boulogne.

## CHAPTER III.

COUNTRY JOYS — LOVE OF NATURE — THE UNSUBDUED SPIRIT —  
STAY AT VENTNOR — THE AWAKENED CONSCIENCE — LOVE OF  
GOD'S HOUSE — HOME EDUCATION — SELF-EMPLOYMENT —  
FAREWELL TO REIGATE.

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“ But he knew that by the lights and clouds,  
Through which our pathway lies.  
By the beauty and the grief alike,  
We are training for the skies.” — MRS. HEMANS.



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## CHAPTER III.

THE brightest portion of Willy's life, as regards earthly enjoyment, began at the close of the year 1852, when his parents removed their home to a comfortable dwelling in Reigate. His delight in country life and its sweet sights and sounds exceeded all expectation. It seemed that the boy-nature had for a time revived, and the glad laugh so long silent was again often heard in the garden walks or green lanes, where, drawn in a basket-carriage by a donkey or pony, he and his mother passed many a happy summer hour; and it seemed that every flower and bird had a special message to him, and that beauties hidden from the eye of the strong and healthy were revealed to Willy in his life of privation and pain. It was almost like the new birth of spring after the sleep of winter, and awoke in the child a love for the Creator's works, on which he would often dilate in his simple way. He liked Dorking, too, and looked

with considerable respect on Evelyn's landscape-gardening—more so, indeed, than on the good man's Diary of the eventful times in which he lived.

Little hardinesses in his nature and manner began to soften in this calm and pleasant life, but it was still cloudy weather in the heart at times. The insubordinate spirit, so frequently produced in children by a long illness, now and then manifested itself. A tendency to domineer over the little ones, and a tone of command and irritation to servants occasionally, disturbed the peace of the happy dwelling, and his parents mourned less over the delicacy of their son's frame than over the development of evil in his character. Notwithstanding some attempts, at times, to shake off authority, there was yet a tender conscience at work, sending him often to his room or into the quiet garden, to think and to pray: "for I knew," he said, a few days before his death, "that it was all wrong with me, and that even if I went to heaven I should not be happy there. One must have the spirit to be fit for the enjoyment of God's presence where He is the chief joy."

A visit to his grandmamma, at Sidmouth, during his mother's absence from home, in the autumn of 1853, terminated in whooping-cough, which reduced him considerably, and was a source of much anxiety

to all his family. He did not, however, show its effects until early spring, when he seemed unusually languid and delicate; and he joined his mother in the Isle of Wight in the May following.

Here he gained considerable strength, and made some progress in the great work of self-control. There were many happy influences, too, about and around him. The near neighbourhood of his grand-mamma, to whom as well as to his aunts he was tenderly attached, was a source of daily pleasure, and often has the loving eye of that dear relative filled at his approach, as he would walk to her lodgings carrying some note or message from his mother, at that time in ill health. This attachment to his grandmamma was very close. Not only as his mother's mother did he hold her in high veneration, but there was a singular sympathy between them in certain points, especially a love of finish, neatness, and order; and he once remarked, when speaking of the untidy habits of a person who was about him, and who made great pretence at putting things in order, that at his grandmamma's there never was any one put out by clearing up and setting to rights, because everything was kept to rights. Her love for him, on the other hand, was much associated with the remembrance of her own beloved and lost son, whom Willy



very closely resembled; and as they were once walking from church hand-in-hand, it struck Willy's mother how sad it would be if her dear parent should live to see this frail child, who seemed almost the son of her old age, cut down ere she was gathered to her rest.

There was evidently a growing interest in the child on the subject of religion. He was particularly favoured during the last few weeks of his stay at Ventnor in the faithful ministry of the Rev. Mr. Vaux, and there could scarcely be a greater privation to him than detention from the house of God. Doubtless the soul was preparing for the seed of the kingdom; but as he once remarked, in reference to loving to hear sermons and attend public worship, "A certain sort of reverence and love for good things is not always a sign of love to God. I liked Mr. Vaux's sermons, but I used to be vexed if I heard any one else preach; so, you see, it was less the message than the messenger I cared for."

His manner at church was very reverent and earnestly attentive; and on one occasion, when the subject and matter of the sermon particularly impressed him, his grandmamma remarked in a letter, "Mr. Vaux preached from the words, 'Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I

will call for thee.' I looked at Willy as he sat beside me, and noticed his earnest, serious face. I thought of Stephen as I looked, for it seemed to shine as that of an angel."

"Ah!" he said, in referring again to that time, "I thought myself all right; but I was not at peace with God. Thank God He did not take me then: I might know much *about* Christ, but I did not know *Him*."

This remark was not original. It was made in allusion to an anecdote related to him by the minister of the parish in which he resided after his removal to Altrincham. A poor man once remarking how different a thing was knowledge *about* Christ to knowledge *of* Him, said, "Now I know all about my is habits, when he goes out, I so on; I have lived near 't know *him*, I don't go into anything of himself, of his I should never go to him in y concerns. And so without Him, I may read about m, but I may never know

took place in the autumn,  
th but little worthy of notice.

The loss of his faithful attendant, Miss Ewing, who had left him in consequence of ill health at the beginning of the year, was unfavourable both to his comfort and progress ; and the lady who had taken her place at Ventnor being also obliged at this time to relinquish her charge, he was again subjected to considerable annoyance in being under the care of a stranger, a trial always severely felt in his feeble bodily condition. The arrangement, however, now made for him, proved one of lasting satisfaction, and the faithfulness and affection of the new inmate was warmly repaid by his grateful love to the last moment of his life.

With a great deal of ardour and perseverance Willy began, after his settlement at home, to practise habits of self-improvement and culture. Idleness had never been a fault of his, but his energies had been rather directed to such employments as he liked, than steadily fixed on the acquisition of useful knowledge. His reading habits became confirmed, and under the tuition of his brother's German master he made some little progress in Latin. Indeed, on looking back, there is a great deal of praise due to the short but important training of that patient teacher. It was manifested in the character of both boys, who had more or less suffered from the desul-

tory nature of a prolonged home education. He taught them to apply, and they both left his hands on quitting Reigate, if not with any great stock of classical knowledge, at least with the power of acquiring and retaining information, which was not previously the case. Willy particularly alluded to the benefit he had received from Mr. F——'s lessons ; and in his words it had better stand, as a useful hint to those who maintain the superiority of a mother's teaching :—"It seemed so strange to feel I *must* apply. It did not matter so much if I did not finish my exercise or say my grammar to you ; and besides, we seemed to look at you so differently from a school-master. I don't know how it is, but since we were very little boys it scarcely appeared your place ; besides, the interruptions which you could not help always hindered us. But there are things beside Latin and French, and so on, that it was nicest and most natural for us to learn from our mother. There was the best thing after all, which no one could have taught as well. I like to think that I learned about Christ first from you, and that my first ideas about God are connected with you."

On many subjects Willy arrived, after this stage of his history, at considerable proficiency, and whatever might be the matter in hand, there was nothing superficial in his examination of it. He did not

dabble in many things, or give his attention to a great many subjects at a time. While engaged in chemistry he would enter fully into it, satisfying himself as far as possible by experiment, and the consulting of such books as were within reach, and never resting until he found the *truth*. It was the same with other branches of natural philosophy. His knowledge, limited as it was by circumstances, was, so far as it went, correct ; his conclusions remarkably just. Once, on being remonstrated with because he stood so long over his test-tubes and retorts, and warned of the great fatigue and pain which would be sure to follow such exertion, he replied,—

“ Well, I am quite willing to suffer. I dare say I shall be tired, but that will be better than feeling that I had wasted time ; which I should feel if I left the experiment unfinished.”

On its being represented that it really was of no consequence, and that nothing depended upon it, he said,—

“ Yes, I think there does. Truth depends on it. I want to prove something.”

Many a little relic of his exquisite neatness and skill in making models of buildings and boats in card-board still remains. The flower-painting, and in later times, butterflies, were unusually well exe-

cuted for one so young and disabled ; and there was always a beautiful finish and completeness in all he did, which made the smallest of his productions valuable. Whether it were a toy from the nursery stores to be repaired, or a delicate ornament to be cemented, he always gave his whole mind to the thing in hand, and thus it was sure to turn out well. How much of the tediousness of invalid life might be relieved, if habits of steadfast self-employment for some useful end were pursued ! It is impossible to imagine a life more dreary than Willy's would have been, with his naturally active, restless turn of mind, but for this moving principle of his daily life. Whoever of the little family grew weary at night, and gaped and stretched for bed-time, or thought dinner long in coming, doing nothing meanwhile but grumble and fidget, Willy never was that one. In his quiet corner on the invalid-chair he never sat with folded hands, but a book was always there. This we would remind any who, like Willy, are afflicted and suffering, was not natural, but the result of strong effort and persevering determination "to redeem the time." From the hour he began that struggle the tedium of sickness and privation wore away : and he became a happy, cheerful invalid.

Time passed on. It was early in the spring of

1856; the primroses yet lingered in their shady nooks, and the violets were not plentiful this year. Willy one evening was seen seated beneath the elm-tree in his beloved garden-seat, while the bells sounded cheerily from the old church-tower, for peace had been proclaimed that day. But he was going through the sorrow of separation from scenes and sounds he loved, and he had evidently been weeping (a rare event) when his mother found him in the garden. A few months' residence in London was before him, and the home which he loved was, for a time at least, to pass into the hands of strangers. Speaking many months after of the shortness of life, he said,—

“I never felt how useless it was to get settled down, as if life was to last for ever, so much as that day before we left Reigate. It was the very greatest trial I ever knew, and made me long for heaven, where things never change.”

Thus mercifully did Willy's heavenly Father work all things for His child's good, the sweet and the bitter alike turning into a cup of blessing. Who can tell but that some angel, ministering to the boy beneath the old elm-tree that night, brought him a message on his wings of consolation, and, pointing upward, cried, “Excelsior!”

## CHAPTER IV.

LONDON LIFE—WILLY'S ILLNESS—VISIT TO SOUTHEM—THE  
CLOUD AND THE BOW—RETURN—THE PHYSICIAN'S OPINION  
—HIS CALMNESS IN THE PROSPECT—CONFLICTS AND HOPES  
—THOUGHTS OF BAPTISM.

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“ I got at last to the Cross, and when I was there I knew I could get no further. If there was not help for me there, there was no help anywhere.”—WILLY.





## CHAPTER IV.

THE London life was ushered in by trouble. After a short stay with some friends at Lewisham, Willy arrived at his temporary house in Regent Square, looking so fragile and delicate, that the conviction forced itself upon us that a continuous town residence would be fatal to all hope of preserving health. However, we had frequently remarked, that after a short absence he struck us more painfully as an invalid. But that his health, even at that time, was giving way, his kind friends, especially the mother of the family, to whom Willy was peculiarly endeared, remarked, and that he seemed particularly thoughtful and mature. "Sometimes, indeed," she said, in writing of him at the time, "there is a look almost ethereal, and an expression of holiness very uncommon in one so young." The first Sunday in the new residence the youngest child was attacked with scarlet fever—but the prelude to a succession of infectious

disorders, of which number, by the measles and the mumps, Willy was seriously affected.

Before this illness attacked him, however, he had a few glimpses of pleasant things. He was able on one or two occasions to reach the British Museum, and we were struck at these times to see how thoroughly he had made his own all the study the Nineveh Remains afforded him, by the perusal of Layard's work, seeming as familiar among the treasures of that department as though he had known them intimately in their original situation. With the insects and birds' nests he was greatly interested; but the fatigue and excitement of this and similar pleasures ended in great weakness, and the languor, the failing step, and the painful effort which either walking or driving had become, rendered us very careful of making many such attempts. He was always pained, too, in walking in London streets by the sight of the little children; and once remarked, as he saw some squalid little beings peeping in at the railings of the Square, that he saw how different it was to live and to exist. He thought a London child could scarcely know what real life was; and as to youth, "they have almost all such aged faces," he said, "on baby bodies." I shall never forget the purchase of the

first bunch of violets that spring. They awakened such painful remembrances, indeed, that he could scarcely restrain his tears, and he said, "I was thinking they might come from some Reigate or Dorking lane."

On the 17th of April, when he walked to a musical-instrument maker's to select a birthday present, he said, despondingly, "Don't get me a *good* accordion: I shall not want one long, perhaps." He had never spoken in this tone of his bodily condition, and it was noted at the time. The measles thoroughly prostrated him. His cough was incessant, and the fever very high, succeeded by attacks of faintness and exhaustion, owing to diarrhœa, which were only relieved by constant nourishment. He rallied, but the cough never left him. After a consultation with a physician and the usual medical attendant, it was determined to remove him at once from London to Southend; first under the care of his father, and afterwards that of an old friend of his mother, to whom he was greatly attached, and who had previously undertaken his charge at Boulogne. But the sea air proved too stimulating, and the accounts from his kind nurse were daily more discouraging. The night cough became hard and frequent, and the fever in the evening severe. A

letter from Miss C——, written after his father had left Southend, afforded a clue to the true source of the distress so evident in his silent and sad reserve, already described by his father as “being under a cloud :”—

“Willy is not like himself,” she wrote, “and seems absorbed and unable to take much interest in anything. He sits constantly in his little chair, often with his Bible open, but more often looking so sad that it makes my heart æche. Yet I do not feel as if I could intrude, for some struggle is surely going on within. I dare not say I think him better—it would be cruel to disguise the truth from you. . . . I fancy he pines for you, and yet I believe there is some other longing yet stronger. He coughs a good deal at night,” &c.

Circumstances at that time rendering it difficult for either his father or mother to go to him, the summons for his return home was at once sent; and the dear child having that very day written a piteous but submissive request for his recall, he came back almost immediately. The change in him was certainly for the worse; and on the following day both the medical men confirmed the fears his appearance had excited, and spoke less sanguinely even of partial restoration.

When the consultation was over, and Dr. Quain had left the house, Willy turned a plaintive, questioning look towards his mother, and, rather by gesture than by words, asked,—

“What does he say?”

“You are very much out of health, dear Willy, but may live some time, if disease can be arrested.”

“I knew there was something very wrong,” he said; “but thank you for telling me the truth.”

“You will do all you can, dear Willy—you must not lose hope.”

“Oh no! that is not natural; and I wish to live a little longer—very much.”

“God will help you, dearest. In all our affliction He (our Saviour) is afflicted.”

“I know that; my best comfort must come from God.”

He hid his face in his hands, and silence seemed the best comforter; but a voice, then, was speaking in that silent woe,—“Whom the Lord loveth He correcteth.”

Willy and his mother began at this time to read regularly together in private, morning and evening; and at his request the Epistle to the Romans was first selected. It was a very happy time, although

there was no revival of hope as to recovery, and he suffered in body considerably. Wakeful nights, feverish dreams, and a piteous cry for help, often called his mother from the adjoining room to soothe and reassure him: and she can now remember certain texts, one especially marked by his own hand in the Bible he used, as having cheered him in an hour of sore conflict, when the remembrance of sin, and the thought of death and judgment, had come as with the power of darkness over his soul. The whisper of these words,—“ I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety,” softly uttered by his mother, soothed the sufferer, for the weary eyelids closed, the grasp of his hand relaxed, and he slept as a tired child. “So He giveth his beloved sleep.” The next morning he mentioned the text, saying how beautiful it was; and when some one read a verse of a poem she admired, he said,—

“Yes, it is very pretty; but, like a good sermon, the text is the best part.”

“ Of all the thoughts of God that are  
Borne inward unto souls afar,  
Along the Psalmist's music deep,  
Now tell me, if that any is  
For gift or grace surpassing this—  
‘ He giveth His beloved sleep !’

What would we give to our beloved ?  
The hero's heart to be unmoved,  
The poet's star-tuned harp to sweep,  
The patriot's voice to teach and rouse,  
The monarch's crown to light the brow ?  
‘ He giveth His beloved sleep ! ’

‘ Sleep soft, beloved, ’ we often say,  
But have no tune to charm away  
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep :  
But never doleful dream again  
Shall break the happy slumber, when  
‘ He giveth His beloved sleep ! ’

And friends, dear friends, when it shall be  
That this low breath is gone from me,  
And round my bier you come to weep,  
Let one, most loving of you all,  
Say, not a tear must o'er him fall,—  
‘ He giveth His beloved sleep ! ’”

E. B. BROWNING.

Then he spoke gratefully of the calm sleep he had enjoyed. His allusion to this era in his history will be better told in his own words, a few days before his death.

The six months' residence in Regent Square drew to a close, and arrangements had previously been made for a final removal to the neighbourhood of Manchester, his father having left the secretaryship of the County Towns Mission for that of the Manchester City Mission. He bore the prospect of



parting from his dear Reigate home very calmly, "for," he said, "I never built much on returning, nor on life anywhere, for any long time; but," he added, with emotion, "Reigate was very dear to me." His mother took up the hymn-book, and read those lines which seemed so appropriate to his case, and which were great favourites of his ever after :—

" We've no abiding city here :—  
This may distress the worldling's mind,  
But should not cost the saint a tear  
Who hopes a better rest to find.

We've no abiding city here :—  
Sad thought, were this to be our home !  
Let but this thought our spirits cheer,—  
We seek a city yet to come."

He had a great deal of suffering about this time, and another opinion was taken as to the probability of his accomplishing the journey northward. The bright side of the picture must not, however, be hidden. He was growing in grace, and there was plainly an elevation of heart and feeling, an evident "setting" of his "affection on things above." Although the prospect of removal to so great a distance was at first depressing, he meekly accepted the trial, and the memory of the last month spent in Regent Square is by no means painful. He much

valued the visits of a clergyman, a connexion of the family, who was at this time active and zealous in his labours in a city parish, and who took great interest in Willy. Those visits were characterized by a simplicity and earnestness which commended them to his heart. His tender sympathy, the gentle touch with which he approached the sanctuary of the soul, the plain yet delicate exhibition of truth, were fully appreciated; and it was touching to look at the teacher and pupil—both young in years, both personally afflicted—holding converse together of Him who was afflicted in all their affliction, and not a High Priest who could not be touched with a feeling of their infirmities.

Owing to conscientious scruples on his father's part with regard to Infant Baptism, Willy had never yet received the outward mark of spiritual grace, and many of the conversations held at this time had reference to that subject. But although there was no lack of response in Willy's mind, and no indisposition to examine into it, he was anxious to weigh the matter well, and to ascertain first, as he said, whether he had the inward grace which he believed should precede the outward sign. The habit of his mind was not impulsive. He was never quick at arriving at a conclusion, and often alluded

to the petition in one of the most beautiful prayers of our Church, that God would give him “a right judgment in all things,”—a prayer abundantly answered in his case, for truly he learnt what it was to “rejoice evermore in God’s holy comfort.” Some time after he expressed great thankfulness that God had sent him so kind a teacher, and added,—“It is not unlikely that I might have overlooked that sacrament but for him: I had never been taught much about the duty, and it came to me like some new truth with which I had fancied I had no concern, but I knew it was very important to look into it before embracing it. I believe both you and he thought me slow, but it was no trifling thing to confess Christ; and I dared not to do so unless I could feel I was his disciple. It would have been bad to act as Peter acted, but worse to be like Judas.” Although no conclusion was arrived at during Willy’s stay in London, his mind was evidently preparing for the confession of Christ before men, and for the sign which was to mark him as “a faithful soldier and servant” of the Lord Jesus.

## CHAPTER V.

THE NEW HOME—THE FIRST SNOWDROP—PREPARATION FOR  
BAPTISM—CONVERSATION WITH THE REV. W. J. READ—  
THE HAPPY DAY—TRINITY SUNDAY—FIRST COMMUNION.

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“ Willy is like the snowdrop —  
His head is drooping now ;  
Passing away, is written  
On his pale and thoughtful brow.

Yet deeper far the character  
With which the Chast'ner's hand  
Marks Willy for His chosen,  
Meet for the better land.”



## CHAPTER V.

THE journey to Manchester was safely accomplished, and at the new residence at Altrincham the winter passed with the usual alternations of the disease; but the cough and expectoration never left him, and it was difficult to say whether he had gained or lost ground. Late in February, on one of those sunny mornings often sent as a promise of coming spring, he crept into the garden, and brought in the first snowdrop to his mother. He it was who had always sought the garden at Reigate for that flower, or searched the green banks of the shady lanes in the neighbourhood for the first delicate heralds of this glad season; and now as he placed the fair little blossom in her hand, she could not but think how much her boy resembled the drooping child of spring.

That same evening Willy was called up-stairs to see a baby-brother, and to give his mother the kiss

of love and sympathy, which was her peculiar evening treasure. It was a tender, touching, almost fatherly look, that he first gave the infant. He held its small hand within his own, gazed on its unconscious face, and then, with a sob and heavy sigh, came to his mother's side, and putting down his face to her pillow, he rested silently a moment, and whispered: "I am so glad, so thankful;—so glad, too, it is a boy: it will replace me. It will be a comfort to you, dear mamma, one day; and while I live how I shall love it!" Happy as Willy was in this event, there was something very affecting in the significant reference to the fact which he ever kept in view, that baby was to be the comforter of his parents. Once he was heard to murmur over his cradle, "I hope you will live and be strong, baby." "Oh," he remarked one night, "I have prayed for baby to be spared to you as I never prayed for my own life." Little Frank certainly came on a mission of consolation to Willy, and unconsciously shed many a blessing on his path, even to the last day of his life, when his strong affection to the little one seemed to be one of the last to be unloosed in the prospect of heavenly joy; and he often repeated, "It was sad to think that to one whom he had loved so much, he would be but as a name for ever." "Not so,

Willy dear: not *for ever*. You will know each other in heaven."

The birth of baby as the buds began to open, and the spring to unfold its beauties, broke in pleasantly on his monotonous life, and just as the apple-trees in the old-fashioned garden were in the prime of their blossoming beauty, Willy began to leave the fireside and to pace those garden walks, feebly at first, but gradually with a firmer step; or in the warm sunny noonday he would sit a little beneath an aged tree, which showered its favours on his head. Calm and peaceful were the Sunday mornings then, recalling something of Willy's childhood in the days when Henrietta lay in her baby-sleep upon the mother's arm, in the old garden of the Norwich Close.

While baby slept, the mother and child read together parts of the beautiful Service which God's worshippers in His house of prayer were reading at that very hour, and often rejoiced in that communion of saints which needs no personal presence to make it complete when praying to the one God through the one Mediator, and helped by the same Spirit, in the same form of sound words.

Willy often spoke gratefully of the provision which was made in the Church Service for all sorts



and conditions of men, under every circumstance and every vicissitude. His heart knew not the faintest taint of bigotry, but, nevertheless, he was fervently attached to the Liturgy of the English Church, and used to express his feelings about the Prayer-book very decidedly.

“It is because there is on every page so much Scripture that I like it so. One feels so safe to use real Bible words, and the Prayer-book is full of them. I have never found any trouble, not even my little troubles, but I could get some prayer here to suit me. I have no doubt, though,” he added, “that the Liturgy suits my sort of mind. I like order. I cannot so well follow extempore prayer—at least, not in public; but that is no reason why others may not benefit by it more. Yet, after all, without praying with the Spirit, it matters not in what words we pray; but we must take care the prayers go in the right way.”

“What way is that, Willy?”

“Why,” he said, and fearing he had appeared to teach, he blushed painfully, “Christ says, ‘No man cometh unto the Father but by *me*.’”

A great event in his religious history was about to take place. It was a warm summer evening, all the household except the mother and the eldest and

youngest child being absent at their accustomed places of worship. Willy sat in his reclining chair, looking at the glimpse of distant blue hills, which could be caught between two old houses in the street; baby slept in his cradle: and after having read a portion of the Evening Service, Willy and his mother talked together of past days, past Sundays, and on his part some well-remembered sermons. The conversation gradually turned to the subject of his baptism.

“I never forgot that subject, mamma. I never meant to put it *aside*; but I think it is a very great step, and I should not like to take it hastily. I have thought a great deal of it to-day.”

“I wish I had named it before,” was the reply.

“It was better not,” he answered. “I am convinced now that it is the duty of all Christians who were not baptized as babies, to be baptized in the faith of Christ; but then it ought to be an act of faith. I am not quite sure whether I should not before have acted more in compliance with other people’s opinions than my own conviction. Besides, I wanted to feel more faith in the Saviour as *my* Saviour. I did not rest all my hopes in Christ till a few weeks ago; but now I believe I may think of it. I should have been afraid to say so before. I

hope Christ will keep me from trusting in any thing, or any one, but Himself. Now that I believe in Him, and that only His blood can save me, I do wish to be baptized. I want to profess my faith in Him before I am too weak."

Remembering his sensitive shrinking from notice, the question was then asked whether it should take place privately at home, or at church.

"It is not far to church," he replied: "let it be there; it will be pleasanter to me."

His father had also thought the right time was come for him to be baptized, and took the opportunity the same evening of speaking to him upon the subject. On his mother visiting his bedside that night, he told her of a conversation he had just had with his father, and how kindly he had sympathised with his feelings. How grateful he felt! "for it would not have been an unlikely thing," he said, "that papa should be half vexed about it, because he sees things a little differently: but that is no real consequence," he added; "we are one in Christ if we believe in and love the same Saviour."

The clergyman of the district being absent, application was made to the Rev. W. J. Read, under whose tuition his two brothers were placed. It was surprising to see how calm Willy, naturally so re-

served and silent, appeared in prospect of his visit. There are a few records of a preparatory interview, occurring principally in a letter addressed to his grandmamma at the time :—

“Dear Willy is very ill to-day—I almost fear unequal for the exertion of to-morrow. Mr. Read had a long conversation with him last evening, and was much affected by his appearance, but no less so with his manner of deep seriousness and solemnity. He first read a portion of the Visitation of the Sick, and then we left them alone. He asked Willy if he were content to leave the issue of his illness with his Heavenly Father? ‘Quite so now,’ was the reply. ‘A few weeks ago I could not have said so. It is but very lately that I have felt resigned to God’s will ; and I should not feel it right to be baptized till I was.’ ”

When Mr. Read in going through the Creed was questioning Willy concerning faith in the different articles of it, he replied, “I don’t see how any one can doubt these things.”

“Yet,” rejoined Mr. Read, “these truths are doubted ; and not only have heresies sprung up in our own Church, which undermine the true faith in the Trinity, but in other communions many equally mischievous doctrines are received.”

“ I know,” said he, thoughtfully ; “ but they are not to be found in the Bible : so no doubts have ever troubled me.”

“ Then you can answer with respect to the Apostles’ Creed, ‘ All this I steadfastly believe ? ’ ”

“ Yes, I am sure of it.”

The day of the baptism dawned, joyous to the parents’ heart even as that of his birth. It was a bright, genial morning in June, the earlier part of which was spent with one of the witnesses chosen, and in the afternoon he wished to be left alone. He was calm, but very pale, as at five o’clock he was led through the garden to the church. On entering the porch a funeral party was observed slowly passing down the aisle, and Willy clasped his mother’s hand ; the sight, he afterwards said, struck him as peculiarly solemn, occurring as it did just at this time. It was a singular coincidence, that the poor old woman, whose interment he witnessed, had but a week before her death been baptized into the faith of Christ by the same clergyman who administered the rite to Willy, it having been neglected in her infancy. She was, moreover, the first adult whom he had ever been called upon to receive into the Church.

The solemn words, “ earth to earth,” had scarcely been uttered over the departed, when the young

Christian went up to the baptismal font ; his parents, his little sisters, and two of his brothers, with other members of his household, and the witnesses, standing around. Willy, having declined the chair provided for his weakness, stood up in the midst. Surely God was with that little company ! We may well believe that he had a very near sense of the presence of Jesus, that dear Saviour of whom he was not ashamed before men. Clearly as a bell did his voice resound as he responded, with thoughtful firmness of manner, to each solemn question ; and it seemed to be in the faith of God's own children that he replied, " All this I steadfastly believe ;" while at the final question the whole earnestness of his soul seemed thrown into the reply, " I will endeavour to do so, God being my helper." There was a little flush on his face ; but no sign of excitement or agitation, as he held out his hand and received the mark of admission into Christ's outward and visible Church. Well may we believe that angels rejoiced to see him welcomed to the Good Shepherd's flock, receiving on his pale brow the sign of that cross to which he clung so fervently. The last prayer ended, silent but happy he left the church.

Now publicly enlisted under the glorious Captain of his salvation, to fight against principalities and

powers, and against the prince of this world and of darkness, the young soldier felt no fear: for he went in the strength of the Lord, with the watchword, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Yet who could look at the frail boy and not feel how short would be the time ere the cross should be exchanged for the crown; strife and labour, for joy and peace; weariness and sorrow, for rest and unclouded happiness in the presence of God and the Lamb for ever? There was the peace of God filling Willy's heart that night as he lay down to sleep, and on bidding his mother "good night," he said humbly, "I hope I shall never have to be sorry for this day."

"Sorry!" his mother answered: "how?"

"I hope I shall not disgrace my profession, I mean: it is very solemn."

The first Sunday after Trinity was the day of his first communion. He was very ill and weak in the morning, and a little nervous lest he should be the worse for the effort. He felt, too, he said, so unfit for it, so unable to enter on such a service as he would like, and afraid lest bodily pain should disturb his thoughts. His mother read him the Collect for the day. With a bright look and glistening eye he took the book in his own hands, and

looked wonderingly over the page, remarking, as he returned it, "It might have been written for me, mamma; it is just what I want: but I do so often find just what I want in a Collect."—"O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Feebly he walked to church, not being able to attend the morning prayers, but only going at the hour for the sacramental service. He was wonderfully helped through it, and it was beautiful to witness his reverent, simple manner, as, clinging to his mother's arm, he drew near the Table of the Lord, and partook of the memorials of the dying love of that Saviour whom he knew to be his. On the same evening he remarked how full of meaning the solemn service had appeared to him. The Baptism seemed to him to be his profession of faith in Christ, and the sign of his discipleship: the Holy Communion, like an answer of love so significant of Christ's good will to *him*. "Oh, as I saw that broken bread," he added, "I did seem to realise



that His body was broken indeed for me ; and when those words Mr. Read said were repeated to me,—‘The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee,’ &c.,—I saw the whole of God’s plan of saving sinners as I never saw it before,—at least I *felt it*. What a blessing to be assured of our share in the benefits of Christ’s death on the cross !” Many a time after, with all the freshness of first love, did he recall that first communion as an hour of joy and peace, the most like heaven of anything he had ever tasted ; and it was remarked that he seemed like another person after this event, so happy, and as if relieved from a burden.

His brother being absent on a short tour in Wales, some one expressed sympathy with Willy for his inability to share in active pleasures, but he said simply, “Oh, since I have loved other things better, I don’t pine much for that kind of pleasure. I don’t envy Martin. I have no wish to be different.”

It must not be supposed, however, that he was insensible to the pleasures of his age. It was often a matter of surprise to those who, on entering the room, saw the delicate, somewhat serious boy, absorbed in his book, or reclining thoughtfully on his invalid chair, to hear him gradually warm into animation as the conversation began, now and then

throwing in a sensible, well-digested remark, if the subject took an intelligent turn, seldom enjoying mere trifling, but, nevertheless, quite capable of appreciating innocent mirth, and entering into a humorous idea with thorough goodwill, as was evidenced by his hearty laugh and merry eye.

When the younger brothers came home from their daily school they were always sure of Willy's ready sympathy in their pursuits and interest in their games. We have often wondered at the keen relish with which he would listen to a detail of boyish sports and country rambles, in which he could never hope to share except in imagination. There never was even a cloud of selfish regret that he must hear of pleasures in which they only could so joyfully participate.

Late in June, 1857, he visited the Art-Treasures' Exhibition, which was opened at this time in the neighbourhood of Manchester. To his artist-eye and correct taste this was a source of great delight. His right judgment and appreciation of the best pictures was remarkable in one who had had so little opportunity of seeing collections of paintings anywhere. Naturally we feared his suffering from the observation which his invalid appearance excited in so motley a crowd, but as his chair moved slowly

along, it was pleasant to observe that his mind was too much absorbed in the interest of the scene to dwell painfully on his privations. To the eye of curiosity I believe he had become heroically indifferent ; from that of sympathy and delicate kindness he never turned coldly away. Still he did not ever willingly make his bodily condition a topic of conversation. He was at least free from the national weakness of complaints about health and weather, usually disliking to hear any one dilate on these subjects.

## CHAPTER VI.

VISIT TO DERBYSHIRE—TEMPTATION—THE WARFARE—THE  
POWER OF SYMPATHY—THE MOTHER'S LESSON—VISIT TO  
BOWDON CHURCHYARD—TRIAL OF SEPARATION—THE  
MOTHER'S ABSENCE—THE LAST BIRTHDAY—WARNINGS  
TO BE READY—PROGRESS HEAVENWARD—INSTANT IN  
PRAYER—THE BROTHERS PARTING—LAST JOURNEY—  
WILLY AT HOME—GROWING IN GRACE.

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“ How full of dread, how full of hope, loometh inevitable death ;  
Of dread, for all have sinned; of hope, for One hath died.”

TUPPER.



## CHAPTER VI.

IN August a visit to Buxton was proposed, and on a day of pouring rain he began his comfortless expedition. There was a long, tedious hour of waiting in a half-finished station at Whaley Bridge. To avoid exposing Willy to the discomfort of a crowded omnibus, a carriage was hired, and this vehicle being out of repair, the rain poured from its roof, completely drenching his legs and feet; and although he bore it patiently, he looked very ill and suffering, and could scarcely speak from hoarseness when he arrived at his journey's end. But his anxiety for baby, who had just recovered from the croup, was more severe than for himself. He used to say, "I know I *must* be ill, but I don't see any reason why baby should. Do take care of *him*."

The cottage accommodation at Fairfield, a little way from Buxton, was certainly insufficient for invalid requirements; and as he stood at the window

that night, looking at the dreary prospect, hills shrouded in mist, the Common almost become a pool, no living objects to be seen but a few ducks and a miserable donkey ; while within, the maid was vainly trying to coax a wretched fire into a blaze up the smoky chimney, amidst the sounds of a barking dog and a scolding couple, he turned round despondently and said, "I wish I were at home."

Many a sick person has uttered that wish, even in sunny France or Italy ; no sky however blue, or vine-clad hills however lovely, can, to the English invalid, whether child or man, replace the missing comforts of home. For these have become the necessities of life ; and the loss of the easy home chair, the home bed, home cookery and attendance, are no trifles to them. Willy was peculiarly alive to these, comparatively, little things ; setting, perhaps, more than a just value upon them. Now, although it is the duty of those engaged in nursing to avert, as far as possible, from the invalid, all needless causes of irritation, annoyance, or privation, it is equally a duty to encourage and foster the heroism of self-control when they are inevitable ; and, while giving a due portion of sympathy in the trial, to brace the patient's mind against fretfulness and daintiness. Willy had some painful but useful les-

sons of this kind to learn at Fairfield. The morning following his arrival there was again heavy rain, and the day, necessarily passed at home, was just such an one as that described by Longfellow in his well-known song of the Rainy Day, beginning,—

“The day is cold, and dark, and dreary.”

The little ones pined for the home nursery, the servants for kitchen comforts. Still the dogs barked, the landlord and his wife quarrelled, the rain fell continually, and the poor patient, ill, weary, and suffering under an accession of cold and hoarseness, begged piteously to go away—no matter where.

At the end of the day, when all the children's troubles were forgotten in sleep—baby in his cradle, and Willy settled in bed—his mother took her usual place by his side to read the evening prayer and the short psalm, with which she and the beloved son always closed the day. She asked him to be hopeful for brighter times, encouraged him by pointing out good signs in the sky, and bade him, above all, to strive against discontent. Poor boy! he always accepted just reproof meekly; and now said, he had been asking forgiveness from God for his irritability and ingratitude, confessing how wrong he had been. Then, with a renewal of sym-



pathy for his mother, he added,—“And you, poor mamma, how tired you must have been! Oh, I do thank you so much for never losing patience with me. Help me not to get selfish. Thank you for being faithful and telling me the truth.” A passage from his favourite, Bishop Wilson’s *Sacra*, was read, and afterwards the Collect for Easter Even :—

“Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with Him; and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection; for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

This, and the Collect already quoted, with that for the Second Sunday in Lent, were always Willy’s favourite prayers, and may, under God’s blessing, yield the consolation to other invalids that they afforded him. On the following day the weather cleared, and Willy ventured out in a Bath-chair as far as Buxton. He was greatly refreshed and animated by the air and the beauty of the road. He was very silent, however, as indeed he usually was when deeply moved; but the tone of his voice was earnest,

and even cheerful, as he echoed the praises of the scenery, and said how glad he was that he had not been indulged in his wish to return home, for it was such a treat to see something beautiful once more. The cavern of stalactites in Poole's Hole, to which place he was one day drawn, in strange forgetfulness of the accustomed caution, amused and delighted him, as did many shorter but pleasant expeditions to other places of interest where his chair could pass; yet it was evident that no ground was gained, and some increase of cough and expectoration seemed to point out the expediency of hastening his return home early in September.

It was a trial to him to leave the place, but a still greater one to part from some relatives who had been visiting Fairfield, and who were to him its chief attractions. The mother of the family, a first cousin of one of his parents, was particularly dear to Willy; and she remarked to his mother how peculiarly sweet had been their intercourse during the absence of the family one Sunday evening, and how mature the boy's mind had seemed to her in the view of his frail and uncertain life, adding, "I have learned some lessons of trust and faith from that child this evening. He said but

little, but it was so mature." Not many weeks more and that dear relative was gone home to the Saviour, her remains being laid in the churchyard of Bowdon, just one year before Willy's own death; though, as the poor people on the Common saw the frail lad and the lady together, they were wont to say that he would be the first to go. They are where there is no more sighing, united in the love of their Saviour. Unbroken now is the joy of those redeemed ones by weary days or painful nights, as they praise the Lamb, and are in His presence for ever. Willy always referred to his intercourse with this family with great pleasure; and of his cousin Walter, one of the sons, who generously devoted himself to his amusement and society, he once said,—

"I don't love him only because he is my cousin, I could not get up such a love; but I often think how good it is of him to come and sit by me, when there is his fishing, and his hill walks, so much pleasanter." He then added,—“Mamma, isn't it true that favours and kindnesses which make people deny themselves, are ten times more worth having than those which don't cost anything? I don't mean *money* presents; but nothing you ever gave me pleased me so much as your giving up time to

read when you wanted to write, and keeping at home with me.”

Another instance in the same household, of the immense power of kindness without gifts, or even many words, he noticed very sensibly. One night, about this time, Miss S——, a sister-in-law of the family, had come in when Willy was suffering from one of those relapses to which he was so subject, and spent an hour or two by the side of his couch. After she had left, some one remarked,—“What a quiet person Miss S—— is!” “None the worse for that,” was his reply. “I know when I am ill, or in sorrow, I like a quiet person, saying just a little; better than a great deal said by persons who do not care for me. I *do* like her. She is the kind of nurse, now, I should choose if I were very ill or dying.” Providentially, it cannot but be believed, this dear friend was close to his dying pillow. She had come to visit some relations in the neighbourhood; and, without previous arrangement, her visit seemed timed for the last three days of his life. On alluding to his old *penchant* for her he said,—“So God takes care even of little things.”

The trials of Willy's sickness here, although alleviated, were by no means subdued. Sometimes hope dawned (we never really gave up hope); and,

one evening, his mother remarked to Willy on the improvement which some friends had noticed in his appearance and powers of motion. He smiled sadly, but did not at once reply. At last he said,—

“Mamma, I am very glad to feel a little better; but, you know, you must not think so much of this. I am like a piece of cracked china that has been riveted. I am mended, but not well—not whole again.”

There was a flood of tears in reply: the disappointment seemed to fall heavily on his mother's heart, and impetuously, rather than tenderly, she cried,—

“Oh, Willy! what *could* I do without you?”

He called her to his low chair, and she knelt down and buried her face on his shoulder. He softly stroked her head, and said,—

“If you love me, mamma dear, never say those words again. It makes my heart ache. You must, indeed, learn to do without me; and if you keep such thoughts, when the trial comes it will be very bitter. Look at baby,” he said, trying to be cheerful; “he will, I hope, grow up healthy and strong, and be a better comforter than I could ever have been.”

“Never quite like a *first-born*,” was the reply.

“Perhaps not,” he added; “but Jesus can be all, and more.”

A few days after this conversation, the baby, to whom he had pointed his mother for comfort, was attacked with a serious illness; and as he saw the tears falling from its sufferings he said,—

“Ah, mamma! you must look for comfort to something better than baby when I am gone.”

One or two short walks, and two services at church, were all the efforts he was able to make before the winter set in after his return home in September. Once he ventured to the Art-Treasures' Exhibition in Manchester, but the fatigue overcame the enjoyment. The autumn was altogether discouraging. His brother taking scarlet fever broke up the family party, and obliged the removal of the younger children to lodgings in Bowdon, about a mile from home. Willy, however, could not be prevailed upon to accompany them; and his favourite attendant, who had been for a short time absent, having returned to her charge, he was left under her care until the removal of the sick ones enabled his mother to return to her home. He lost ground at this time, and could scarcely be prevailed upon to leave the house.

Once only during the children's stay at Bowdon

he came in a fly to visit them, and walked to the churchyard to see a little cousin's grave. He was much pleased with the situation of the old church, and said,—

“I should like to be buried here, rather than to be taken to Norwich.”

His mother pressed the thin hand as it lay on her arm, and as she looked at the fallen leaves and then on her first-born, the words fell painfully on her heart,—“We all do fade as a leaf.” The dear relative, who had ministered so greatly to his happiness at Buxton, was taken, late in October, to her everlasting rest, and the event made a considerable impression on Willy's mind. It seemed to bring his own mortality powerfully before him, and he appeared solemnised and saddened.

Nearly the last separation between Willy and his mother was in April of 1858. It was not until her return, after a fortnight's absence, that she knew how much he had suffered at the time. He was evidently sunk in body and low in spirit, and when she took her place by his bedside, to read the accustomed evening portion of Scripture, and have a little quiet converse, he said,—

“Ah! I don't mind night now. When I knew you were so far off I felt lonely.”

His mother repeated the lines which she knew had more than once comforted him during sleepless nights,—

“Sun of my soul ! Thou Saviour dear,  
It is not night if Thou be near :  
Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise,  
To hide Thee from Thy servant’s eyes !”

“It would be sad,” she added, “if your mother were that cloud, Willy.”

“Very,” was his reply. “I have sometimes feared that for both of us. I remember a verse you once said to me at Ventnor, that whatever passes as a cloud between us and God was sin for us, whatever it might be in itself. Well, mamma, we must watch that nothing may come between us and Christ.”

He must have alluded to his mother’s love, for in a moment, with an affectionate kiss, he said,—

“There will be no loving one another too much in heaven. Christ will be *all in all*.”

His sixteenth birthday having passed during the separation, he referred again to the trial that her absence had been to him—speaking of it as putting everything in the shade, adding,—

“Where shall I be another birthday, mamma?”



“I hope with Jesus very near you, dear, even if the day be spent on earth.”

“I hope so—but,” he continued, sadly, “I don’t really think I am fit for heaven. I am so irritable, so very soon get discontented, and speak sharply to the children so frequently. I know, too, I often seem ungrateful to you; and I am not so grateful as I ought to be, particularly about little things you get to tempt my appetite. I was reading this morning that chapter about the fruits of the Spirit: I have very little of any of them.”

“Dear Willy, you are writing bitter things against yourself.”

“Oh, no! I don’t feel despairing about my sin, because I know Christ was manifested to take away my sin; but it is best to see the matter as it really is. It is better for me not to deceive myself.”

A visit from an old friend at this time was a great pleasure. She had often been a solace to him, in the earlier part of his trial, at Boulogne, and had witnessed his great soul-conflict at Southend. He always spoke of her with affection, and, for a little time, he appeared quite refreshed and cheered by her visit. Faithfulness in attachment was a marked feature in his character. If his affections were slower to arouse than those of many, they certainly

burned with no unsteady flame when once they caught the spark.

“I cannot believe,” he once said, “in any love that changes. If I once really love, I never can *unlove*.”

In July he was greatly comforted and instructed by the visits of the Vicar of Bowdon, the Rev. W. Pollock, who had but lately been settled in the parish. As no one else was present, it is impossible to detail the conversations which took place during those first visits, but it may easily be imagined that Willy, who was naturally so reserved, would not immediately throw off the habit of silence to a stranger. He always spoke, however, with great gratitude and satisfaction of those earlier instructions, and more than once expressed his pleasure in the prospect of receiving them regularly, on his removal to Bowdon. On one occasion, when his mother returned after the absence of an hour or two, he said, in reference to a pain in the side of which he had complained before her departure,—“I have not felt it since; but I have had something else to think of: I have had such a nice call from Mr. Pollock.” He looked quite animated and cheered, and remarked what a good thing he felt it to be for him, to have the privilege of such visits. On being asked the

subject of the conversation, he replied,—“Oh, he didn’t press me with questions like catechising me, and so I could speak better than sometimes. I liked it so much, and I feel I could soon talk better to him than to any one except you.” Then, naming the chapter read, he continued,—“Oh, it is not, after all, that he said anything new. There are no *new* truths, you know; but one thing I noticed, he put old truths so plainly and clearly; they seemed all placed in order in my mind when he was gone, and a new light was thrown on one or two things which I did not understand before.”

It was very interesting to observe how simply and gratefully Willy received God’s word. Often when it has been said in his presence that such and such a passage was obscure, or difficult, especially in St. Paul’s Epistles, he has replied,—“I don’t suppose it is so; the darkness must be in us. Well, mamma, there is enough to understand even in St. Paul’s Epistles—enough to save me, I know, if *I believe!* Once that 8th chapter of Romans was a mystery to me; I did not know what it meant: but since I have sought the help of God’s Holy Spirit I do now. I have left off trying to find what I wish and want in the Bible, but am content to take it as I find it, and test my faith by the word.”

The summer was passing away, and preparations were making for a change of residence, from the narrow street into a house situated on higher ground, and nearer to the open country; but the prospect was painful to him, and once or twice he said, "I wish you would not remove during my lifetime: but never mind, it will make little difference now." His views, little as many believed them, were correct. Too surely he was passing away. One Sunday, after a drowsy afternoon, his sleep much disturbed by coughing, he suddenly requested, in the evening at tea, that every one would leave the room; and until the children were gone he did not remove the handkerchief which he held pressed to his mouth. When the door was shut he exclaimed, with some agitation, "Oh, mamma!"—and the significant mark of blood at once told the rest. "I felt,—I *knew* then," he said a short time after, "that your trial was very near." His doctor was soon with him; but, before his arrival, he asked earnestly as to the probability of immediate danger. "I know the rest," he said to his mother: "it is a bad sign." And then, with renewed anxiety, he again questioned her as to this symptom, and inquired whether his case resembled that of his grandfather, who died of hæmorrhage after three days' illness. He was soon

reassured ; and when he had been assisted up-stairs to the drawing-room, notwithstanding a return of bleeding, he said, calmly and lovingly, “ What a blessing to *believe* ! ” His mother thought he alluded to faith in God, but her heart throbbed with grateful emotion, joyful even at that hour of anxiety, as he answered, “ I spoke of faith in *your word* just then. Suppose I could not trust you *now* ! ” He then expressed the perfect confidence he had in his medical attendant, and said, “ It would be such miserable work to have a doctor near me now who would flatter me. I don’t think it is right always to be pressing him for his opinion, but I *should* like to know if I am soon to die. Perhaps \* \* \* \* will tell me.” Many times during the succeeding weeks of his illness he said, when speaking of the skill and kindness of his medical man, “ Yes, but it is his true nature I love so. I would never trust a man with my life if I could not trust to his word.”

After \* \* \* \*’s visit, which was kindly lengthened, in order to cheer the sufferer, there was a serious expression on the dear boy’s face ; and as he lay considerably relieved by the application which had been tried, he said kindly, “ You were very frightened, dear mamma ; I am so afraid you thought I was. It was not exactly for myself, but you turned pale,

and I thought *you* were not prepared. Still I must own that I did feel shocked. It is so easy to look at death at a great distance, and I have always been told mine would be a lingering case. This, however, appeared to send me downhill. Yet I have been thinking it is a mercy: it is a warning, certainly. In my complaint people go on with but little change, till they really need some such thing as this to remind them that they are dying, and must be preparing. I am not sorry for this, either on your account or my own."

Willy never fully rallied from this attack; he always spoke of himself as greatly *damaged* by the hæmorrhage: his breathing was shorter, and the difficulty of going up-stairs considerable. His nights, too, were more disturbed, both by cough and fever, and the mornings languid and spiritless. Still there was no sudden loss of power. The step was but little feebler, though he leaned more heavily on the arm which supported him in his garden walk, or occasionally to church. The hour for rising became a little later; and certainly the habit of prayer, long formed, appeared to be more vigorously kept than ever. Many a time, after a bad feverish night, his kind attendant, Miss Smith, has listened nervously for his step on the stair, feeling sure of the exhaustion

from which he must suffer; but weakness and illness never hastened Willy from his knees. The last steps of his journey were hallowed by prayer and praise. His industry continued almost to the last; and his collection of butterflies and moths, which he had commenced the previous year, still increased, being beautifully preserved and arranged, by his own neat hand. He was, for the most part, cheerful, and very much more equable in temper, taking interest in the joys and sorrows of the household, and in all that passed around him, as if he were not about so soon to leave, as he well knew, his earthly for his heavenly home.

The greatest trial Willy had ever yet known was the departure of his dearest friend and brother for a few months' residence in Oxfordshire, with his late master, the Rev. W. J. Read. He said but little until the matter was decided, and it was indeed so hastily concluded that he had not much time for dread; but it affected him very deeply: and when Mr. Read came to bid him farewell, as he knew for ever, he said, on going to bed that night,—“Who would wish to live here always, with all these changes and troubles? I was so sorry to bid Mr. Read goodbye. I should never feel to any one quite the same.

He baptized me, and I took my first Communion from him ; but, that is not the worst. Oh, Martin ! Martin !”—and he burst into an agony of tears.

The brothers parted before Willy rose. There was a settled sadness on his brow as he seated himself to breakfast, and in a moment he rose, left the table, and throwing himself into his chair, said,—

“I cannot eat—don’t ask me. I can only think of Martin: home won’t seem like home without him. Suppose I never see him again!—and I have not said half I intended, and I can never write my thoughts—I do love him so.”

Then, seeing his mother weep, he threw his arms round her neck, and said,—

“Well, if *you* don’t leave me as long as I live I shall not be quite desolate here.”

And hearing the well-known step of his medical friend he said,—

“I once was afraid of having a young doctor, but now I am so glad. I don’t want a father now, but a brother. I believe he will be like one to me.”

He seemed a little brightened in a few days, and was even willing to make a visit to Manchester, where his kind doctor had promised to show him several objects likely to interest and amuse him in his father’s residence,—a beautiful lathe among the



number. His mother was considerably struck, in accompanying him to town, with the increased delicacy of his appearance, and was surprised to hear the remark of an acquaintance on an improvement which, alas ! even if evident to him, was but fictitious.

She looked at Willy, wondering if the remark reached his ears. His countenance betrayed no emotion, but on his return he said, voluntarily,—

“Mamma, I wonder if Mr. —— said that to flatter me or to please you ! Such remarks don’t make a person who is ill feel better, but *worse*, because they know it is so contrary to the truth. Oh, how thankful I am that I have not a flattering doctor !”

He enjoyed that visit to Manchester very much, and, encouraged by the power which remained, we resolved on sending him to Lytham, a small watering-place on the coast, for a week or two, during the bustle and unsettlement of a removal.

He had great comfort in the prospect of having his dear father all to himself, and we have no reason to suppose that the change was otherwise than pleasant to him. Indeed, during the first few days he appeared to enjoy the new scene, and wrote pleasantly and hopefully of the place. It was relieved from dulness by the near vicinity of an aunt

and cousins, moreover, and his favourite friend, Miss S——, who spent one afternoon with him during his father's absence in Manchester. Little did she think that the time was so near at hand when the loving heart which beat so gratefully to her for her self-denial, as he termed it, in giving up an hour or two to an invalid, would so soon be still in death. He did not at the time speak of any increase in bodily suffering, but she noticed a change for the worse, both in appearance and power.

In a short time the sea-air began to act unfavourably on his pulse, the cough and feverish symptoms increased, and he longed for home.

The impending stroke was plainly hastening, and after a visit from his medical friend, it was decided that no time should be lost in his return.

Meanwhile it may be imagined how busy were loving hearts and hands in preparing Willy's new room at Bowdon, a little bedroom already called his, with his favourite pictures and possessions arranged. "But, oh, mamma," he said, in allusion to this subject, "it seemed to me as though you were blind to the fact that I should never need all this preparation. I knew, while you were getting my new home ready, that it would only be like a waiting-room for my heavenly home."

As he came up the pathway from the fly on the afternoon of his return, the mother's heart presaged that which the boy felt, that he was passing rapidly away, and that our loving grasp must be soon unloosed.

His mother thus writes of that evening,—

“It was with sorrow and faintness of spirit that, as I took my place to read the Collect and the Psalm of even, I noticed the labour for breath, and witnessed the distressed expression of countenance which the accumulation on the lungs occasioned. He calmly and seriously spoke to me on the subject as soon as the reading was over, saying how great he felt the progress to be; and as I put my hand to the beating heart, I could not gainsay his words. He said very sweetly, as I bade him good night,—‘I am so glad to be with you again, though papa is a nice companion, and a nice nurse, too; but, I suppose, only a mother *can* nurse as you do. There are some things a man cannot do so well as a woman. I mean,’ he said, with a kiss, ‘as a mother; and you and Miss Smith have made me very particular.’ Before midnight I was summoned to his side again. Severe pain came on, and mustard plasters had to be applied to the side and chest. Then followed sickness, and the discharge from the lungs

was considerable. As I left him towards morning in a feverish and troubled slumber, I felt that the sun of hope had indeed set, and that I must now prepare to enter with my child on the sorrow of parting; nevertheless, joyful was the conviction, that as the outward man was decaying, the inward man was renewing day by day."

Notwithstanding the evident increase in the severity of many of his symptoms, an utter failure of appetite and strength, Willy was by no means disposed to fall into the habits of an invalid. He never exacted needless attendance, or the performance of any office which he had been accustomed to do for himself. He retained to the last the scrupulous care which, both from education and principle, had been cherished, of any thoughtless use of the bell. It was within a fortnight of his death that he carried his palette into the kitchen to be washed; and on being expostulated with on the unnecessary fatigue, he said, jocosely,—

"Ask Charlotte's legs if they disapprove of my waiting on myself." And then added, a little sadly, "I am plenty of trouble as it is."

We were, meanwhile, painfully struck with the fact, that he did not on his entrance into the new house take his place amongst us as an inmate who

would long continue with us. Little matters of arrangement, of orderly plans, and of personal comfort, which had hitherto been subjects of great interest and moment to him, were almost overlooked. Any trifling inconvenience which the change of residence involved was quietly submitted to, as but temporary. He was still among us, but not as formerly, influencing every little household plan. He was here, as he sometimes expressed, but as a visitor, and was hastening away to "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"—the Home of his Saviour, whither his hopes and best affections had already fled, and for which, while in the frail tabernacle, he groaned, being burdened, waiting for the hour when, in God's own time, mortality should be swallowed up in life.

## CHAPTER VII.

NEARER HOME—MIDNIGHT CONSOLATIONS—POWER OF GOD'S  
WORD—THE LAST SERVICE ON EARTH—FAREWELL TO OUT-  
DOOR LIFE—BROTHERLY LOVE—THE CHILD IN THE STORM  
—PARTING MESSAGES—THE ONE MEDIATOR.

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“ Leave thy dying bed to Jesus,  
Take no thought for that dark hour :  
By his death, his life, he frees us,  
Both from death's and Satan's power !  
Shrink not from the dying strife,  
'Tis thy passage into life.”

*Invalid's Hymn Book.*



## CHAPTER VII.

THE nights became increasingly restless, and it was a great comfort to Willy at this time to have a small bed placed in his parents' room, where his bodily wants were anticipated; and, what was even more important to his earnest, striving spirit, occasional consolatory words from the Book of Life were whispered by loving voices, in the midnight hour, or in the cold, grey, autumn mornings, which dawned on him too often unrefreshed by rest or continuous sleep. Yet, in those dark hours there were gleams of heavenly light. The languid eye has brightened many a time as, in answer to some piteous, seldom impatient, expression of distress, those words of comfort were repeated: "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame." "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched



with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." The latter text was often a great source of strength to Willy ; and on the night of the 16th of October he said, "I do like to think of the human nature of Christ. To know that He knows my bodily sufferings is a comfort, and there is to me something so very consoling in the knowledge that He can distinguish between infirmity and sin. I have been thinking to-night how kind and merciful it was of Jesus to excuse His disciples for sleeping while He was in His agony in the garden. Never once to reproach them ! Only that mild question, ' Could ye not watch with me one hour ? The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.' " Then, after a pause, he added, " How full of comfort the Bible is ! What a pity people ever read it to find fault and cavil ! What should I be without my Bible *now* ? You may sometimes say what is wrong, or what may not meet my case. God's word is always right." When his breathing was much oppressed, and he was reminded of the sufferings of Christ, he said, " Ah ! and the weight of a world's sin, too, added to these ! Oh, what love was Christ's ! ' Not that we loved Him, but that He loved us ! ' "

On the 15th he came down-stairs with difficulty, but continued to employ himself at intervals, and enjoyed the quiet company of a dear friend of his mother. Once, on her leaving the room, he said, "I keep thinking first of one person, and then another, who I should like to be with you by and by, and I almost always fix on some quiet one. Miss B—— is just the sort of person. Now, when I sit alone a little time with her, or with ——, even if they don't talk, I have a kind of thinking conversation with them; and, when they do speak, they generally say something worth hearing; and then, when we know that they love the same sort of things we love—heavenly things, I mean—it makes even their silence better company than other people's talk."

The Sunday following, Willy accompanied his father to church. It was the last time his voice was ever to join in the confession of sin or the song of praise in God's house; and many who saw him that day marked the change in the boy's aspect, and the peculiar solemnity of his countenance, for he knew and felt it was his last service on earth. He was tired on his return, but looked calm and happy, and spoke with great interest of the sermon. "I am thankful I heard it," he remarked. "I have

been thinking a good deal on the subject, and I think I see it more clearly now ; not by my reason exactly, but many things which we cannot reconcile we may yet receive and believe, because we find them laid down clearly in God's word. The worst of it is that we are proud ; and when we find two doctrines in the Bible, such as justification by faith, and also by works, instead of thinking that the confusion in our minds is owing to our own want of light and comprehension, we must needs quarrel with one or other of the truths. Just so with election." After a pause, " Don't you think, mamma, one mistake in reading the Bible, and one reason of our getting so little good out of it, is, that we make out a sort of rule of faith of our own, and then go to the Bible, and try and bring that down to our own standard, instead of making our religious opinions agree with the Bible ?"

The sermon to which Willy referred was on the subject of election, which had, unknown to us, occupied a considerable share of his attention. An expression of calm and holy peace was remarked on his pallid face that evening by more than one member of the household ; and again and again he said how happy his Sundays had been ; " and this," he added, " though I feel very weak and tired, is

about the happiest I ever spent. He remarked, too, how very good God had been to him in casting his lot, for some time past, in the vicinity of a sound, faithful ministry. "Those who hear a sermon every week, mamma," he said, "can have no idea what the hearing of God's word occasionally is—I mean, what a *treat*. I have for a long time, you know, heard almost every sermon as if it might be my last. My health being so uncertain, and as summer days ended, I knew I must prepare for long absence from church, so that I seemed to grudge every minute that passed there; and to-day I felt so sorry when I saw Mr. Pollock close the book. Yes, I believe it was my *last* sermon." A sorrowful emotion could not be restrained; observing which, he said, "Ah, but I shall have something better if it is my last. I shall hear Christ's *own* voice."

On the following Monday, Willy accompanied his cousin to the garden and conservatories of a neighbouring friend, and on his return he expressed himself pleased with the beautiful flowers and ferns; but in the evening, on recurring to the subject, he remarked,—

"It would have pleased me more once; everything here now has a grey, sober look to me. I hope A—— did not think me ungrateful because

I was so silent; he little knew what I was thinking of all the time. I was thinking that it was my farewell to outside life. I shall never, most likely, go out again. Don't be sorry; *I* am not so. Oh," he continued, looking at the scattered leaves, "it will be such a happiness to be where there is no more winter, no more death of leaves, or flowers, or anything, and no more changes. No winter, mamma! You must think of that next winter, when I am not here; and remember how we used to dread it, and the east winds and sharp frosts in spring."

Soon he became more cheerful, but he was dispirited in the prospect of Miss B——'s departure; and on the morning of the day on which she left he seemed much worse, and remarked significantly, when she was gone,—

"It is always very painful to me to say goodbye; but goodbyes now are last ones, and they make me rather sad."

As soon as he was dressed he begged to have a message sent to the Vicarage; but the interview with Mr. Pollock being, at his own request, private, there is no record of it beyond an expression of thankfulness on Willy's part that he had been able to speak more freely than usual. The arrangement of his collection of moths and butterflies in a new

cabinet seemed to interest him for an hour or two, but observing an anxious expression on the faces of those who stood by, he said,—

“I shall be tired, I know, but I want to leave them all in order for Ernest.”

On the 23rd a great change for the worse took place. Difficulty of breathing as soon as he lay down alarmed him, and the night was constantly interrupted by spasms on the chest. On the 24th he appeared still worse; and the power of expectoration, which had hitherto relieved him, seemed suddenly to fail. He said at one time that he felt dying; but the remedies applied afforded some relief, and it was hoped that, by great care in any movement of position, a return would be avoided.

He breakfasted down-stairs as usual—a little later than his accustomed hour—but he could not eat; and as soon as the tray was taken away he rose, and, throwing his arm round his mother's neck, said,—

“Don't cry, dear mamma. It is a mercy, I think, this giving up, one by one, of your hidden hopes for my life. You are coming to it by degrees, dear mother. There is no doubt the change is near. My appetite is quite gone, and my strength less and less.”

There was a silence, broken only by low weeping,—the constrained cry of Rachel going up to God. It was impossible, however, to look at the calm young face, with its cloud of sadness for his mother's sorrow, and be otherwise than calm, especially as he said,—

“Mamma, I have always thought that it must be dreadful pain for a relation, or even for a doctor, to have to break such tidings to a dying person. I remember your telling me of being present at Mr. S——’s deathbed, when the doctor had to tell him he had not many hours to live. Yet he was a good man. You are saved this, mamma. Better that I should have to tell you than that you or papa should have to tell *me*. Ah, it *is* a trial,” he added. “I know it must be; and talking will not help you. We must pray.”

Thus the little diary continues; and henceforth the simple record, in which his mother, continually by his side, pencilled down his remarks, will be the safest guide to follow.

After a long silence he said,—“I have been praying for you as I never prayed but for my *own soul*. I have been praying that you may acquiesce in God’s will.” He then rose, and going to the writing-table, he began to sketch a butterfly,—one

of a group designed for Miss B——. After an hour's work he brought it to me, and said,—“I could only finish one. Tell her so, with my love. I do not often leave things half done, but this I must.” He then returned to the table, replaced the colours in the box, carefully washed the brushes, and turned the key; but, instead of putting it in his pocket, he left it in the box, and pointing to the palette he said,—“Have that washed, please: it had better be washed *now*.” I quietly put it in the drawer, but he watched the action closely, and as I returned to my seat at his side he said,—“Poor mamma! May I say something? In your sorrow for me when I am gone, pray do not cling to things like this. They only feed grief, and keep the soul in the dust. They will not really comfort you for me. They won't help you to rise to that place where I hope to be. There is no need for you to hoard up remembrances. There is no fear of your *forgetting*; a great fear of your thinking too much of me. Oh! mamma, I cannot, indeed, bear the thought of coming as a cloud between you and God, as once you did between my Saviour and me when you left me to go to Norwich. But I am afraid of any sort of relic love for you, mamma. Relics have done harm, not only in the church, but in the



heart. Nothing is safe in that way if it hide Jesus from us."

*Oct. 25th.* A medical relative, for whose opinion Willy had always felt great respect, came over from Manchester to visit him. I had promised, if possible, to obtain his judgment, as to the probable duration of his illness; but there was, indeed, little occasion to ask questions. The absence of encouragement, rather than the positive declaration of immediate change, spoke the opinion plainly. As no delusive hopes had ever been raised of ultimate recovery, there were no airy castles to bring down. The question was evidently now one of days, rather than weeks. Willy's first question on my return was, "What does —— say?" But on receiving rather a vague answer, he replied, "You know it was only for *your* sake I wanted the whole truth; but never mind, I must get A—— to tell you."

"I know you are worse, dear; I did not need any doctor to tell me that."

"Yes, but I have often been worse, and after a week or two have got better; now I am sure I shall never be better. Don't think me hard for saying this. It is better for you, and papa too, to know the worst, if it can be called the worst. I can quite

understand how it is that the shock of any one's death is felt, even if it has been long expected. You are so used to seeing me ill, that a little worse, and then a little worse again, does not seem to make any difference; but I think you do see it, mamma. I see many signs of your being prepared. I like very much to notice that you do not now talk of what we will do next year. Oh! one thing I must say to you, mamma, while I remember it. It is about the children's Christmas-tree. . . . Don't begin to look so sad. I want to talk to you calmly. I hope, mamma, I shall be with Jesus before the time for the tree comes (Martin's birthday, on the 20th of January). Now, I dare say, it will be very sad to you to think of preparation for it, when I am not here to help you: but it will be proof of your real love to me if you will have it this next year as usual. Why," he said, with a sweet smile, "why, mamma, make my going home to Jesus a matter for sorrow? Why deprive the children of their joy, because I am gone to a greater? No; if you feel disposed to be sad, when the Christmas-tree is lighted, just think I am with Jesus. I shall know more of the reason of Christmas joys than you, I dare say, by that time, and shall have, indeed, cause to rejoice that Christ came into the world."

I repeated some lines from his favourite Christmas piece, "The song of joy at dawn," when he expressed, very earnestly, his belief in the reality of his coming Christmas joys.

" Hark ! a voice from yonder manger,  
Soft and sweet, doth entreat,  
Flee from woe and danger ;  
Brethren, come from all doth grieve you :  
You are freed,  
All you need  
I will surely give you."

Willy made some sensible remarks on the observance of times and seasons, saying, "I always think such days as Christmas Day and Good Friday have been useful to me. What we may think of any day we are apt to forget altogether. I remember the first time I ever thought of the crucifixion, as a great fact to be realized, was on a Good Friday at Dorking. We had a holiday, and I recollect your reading to me, in the morning, the account of the crucifixion. I had heard it before, of course, but it seemed to come with more power when I found the day was set apart for special services on that account. I know we may think too much of such days—or rather think of them in a wrong manner—but there is a fear of thinking too little of the

great subjects which they commemorate: at least, so I have found it."

The afternoon being the Saturday half-holiday, Willy expressed disappointment on account of his father's absence at Knutsford, a town a few miles distant; and when reminded that he had gone to fulfil a long-standing engagement with Mrs. D——, a lady who had shown Willy many marks of kindness, he said mournfully, "Yes, but I may not be here another Saturday."

"Do you know, mamma, that the hope of Saturday and Sunday has often cheered me up from Monday morning. On Saturday it was so nice to have papa at home to dinner; you know, since I have been too ill to come down to breakfast, I should scarcely have seen papa but for these days. Not that I wanted better company than yours, dear mamma, but you could not, if you would, like all those things of which I was so specially fond—Chemistry," he added, with a faint smile, "which always seemed to be associated in your mind with dirty hands and spoiled table-cloths. Oh!" he continued, suddenly looking grave, "I don't think Martin and I have been very considerate though,—what a number of things we spoiled at Reigate! You have been very indulgent, and you don't know how much pleasure

you gave me. However, no pursuit and no pleasure, no, nor any body, after all, have ever given me half the comfort that you have done. I seemed to forget I was ill, even lately, when you took your work and sat by me. I cared for nothing else. . . . . Don't cry, mamma. Ah ! I dare say you cannot help it ; I know I could not, if *you* were ill and going to leave me."

To change the subject from any personal bearing, he began to send messages to his absent friends, and spoke with much tenderness, among many others, of his governess and much-loved friend, Miss Ewing.

"Oh, mamma," he said, "how important it is to place good influences about children ! Just before Miss Ewing came to us, we were in a very wild, reckless state,—owing to your illness, I suppose. I believe a bad governess then would have ruined us. It was a sad time for us ; you were in ill health, and it was before we had our good servants. When Anne and 'Car' came, it seemed such a change from the bad, unequal treatment we had been accustomed to from Elizabeth ; and then to find Miss Ewing really anxious to do us good, and to carry out your plans ! I remember she was the first person, besides you and papa, that I really *respected*. She tried very much to lead us to Christ from the first. I can recollect some

of the hymns she taught me ; and I remember, too, the effect they had on me, even though I did not understand their full meaning. My favourite was,—

‘ There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.’

“One verse,” he added, after a pause, “I did understand, even then,—

‘ The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That fountain in his day ;  
And there would I, though vile as he,  
Wash all my sins away.’

“Dear Miss Ewing ! I shall, perhaps, soon see her in heaven ; if not, tell her how useful she was, even though she little knew it.”

“I cannot send any message to Martin now,” he continued. “Perhaps, when I am nearer home, I shall cling less to him. It is, at present, too much to face—the fact, I mean, that we shall not meet again on earth. We were like David and Jonathan, I think—friends as well as brothers. God was very good to me in giving me A——’s friendship just when I most needed it. Indeed, I do not know what I should have done without him, after Martin went to Oxford. Don’t you remember when first you

you gave me. However, no pursuit and no pleasure, no, nor any body, after all, have ever given me half the comfort that you have done. I seemed to forget I was ill, even lately, when you took your work and sat by me. I cared for nothing else. . . . . Don't cry, mamma. Ah ! I dare say you cannot help it ; I know I could not, if *you* were ill and going to leave me."

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asked me how I should like to have him for my doctor? I thought him too young; but even the youth which I dreaded has been a great advantage and blessing. God can turn anything into a blessing, can make all things work for good. I am sure He has in this case. I like A——'s sincerity so much—I observe it in his daily life; as well as his professional character. Yes, as soon as ever I found how true he was, I forgot he was young, and gave him my whole confidence at once.

“The evening I first raised all that blood, and I really thought I should not live through the night, I waited very anxiously till he came. I don't know how it was, but I believe if I had felt actually dying I should have believed him. He looked so true as he told me not to be frightened, and he did not comfort me the less for not treating it lightly, as if it were of no consequence. He did not say, as some doctors do, ‘Oh, you are all right, you will get well fast enough;’ he never said that his medicines would cure me: this is why I have always had the greatest faith in trying them as alleviations, and I believe I have never taken any medicines with more heart than I have his. They have certainly been useful, and he has made this last year of my life a very happy one, and far easier than any since I was first ill. You

must tell him this when I am gone ; it looks like flattery if I say it, but he ought to know it, for his encouragement.\* He has been like a brother too in kindness, especially since Martin went. . . . I do wonder," he said simply, after a few minutes' rest, "that A—— took so kindly to me ; there is so little in me to recommend me to any stranger. I believe it is God's doing. He made you, not love me more, but even more tender and patient with me than with all the others, and so, I suppose, He disposed his heart towards me."

"Perhaps, dear, it is not so wonderful, when we think of your great afflictions and privations."

"Perhaps so ; but it is a different love and notice from that which some have shown, which has not been altogether pleasant."

"How is that ?"

"I do not know how to explain it ; but a way that seemed to remind me of my appearance, which often I quite forgot—so unlike the delicate kindness of A——, and others besides him. It is a mistake

\* These remarks of Willy, on the medical treatment he received, have been more than once crossed out of the manuscript ; but, believing there is sound truth in their teaching, they are permitted to stand, in the hope they may meet the eyes of some to whom they may be found words in season.



people often make, that of adverting to bodily infirmity."

A little restlessness and anxiety now took the place of his calm manner, and he kept looking at his watch,—“For it seems as if papa never would come. Poor papa!” he said to himself, as he lay with his eyes closed, “he *will* miss me! How kind he has been in doing my little commissions for me! they must often have troubled him, and yet he loves me so that I dare say the trouble will be greater to have no Willy to think about. I have long felt more like a brother to him than a child, for he has made quite a companion of me. You must try and forget your own grief, dear mamma, in comforting him. I am not afraid of papa’s sorrow, for though he is very firm in everything, and I know he is firm in love to me, he loves God better than us all, and there will be his *strong* consolation. And I know *you* love God, mamma,” he added, as though in apology; “but we are not all made alike: you have a sort of imagination which adds to your love a memory for little incidents. I have often wondered how you could remember small things and little speeches which I had forgotten; and I can see very plainly how this tenacious kind of memory may be rather a snare to your keeping your thoughts too much with me.

You must pray against it. Papa cannot miss me as you will—I see *that* ; and you will often feel lonely, for whoever you had not, you were sure to have me close by. Try and bring Constance, and Agnes, and baby to me in heaven. They are young, and at present cannot be such companions as I have been ; but you were patient with me many years before I became your friend. I know you will miss me when papa is away and you have no one to bring your little troubles to, but it may send you oftener to Jesus.”

As he said these last words in broken speeches, and at intervals, my pent-up tears broke forth, and I said,—

“ But, oh, it may not be yet—not quite yet ! ”

“ It will be very soon, mamma ; before many days, perhaps.”

“ Still you may be very near me,” was the low reply ; “ who knows ? a guardian angel, it may be.”

“ Mamma ! mamma ! ” he answered, “ that is a beautiful thought ; but are you sure you find it in the Bible ? It may be so ; but there is no promise of it. Certainly, if earthly love would fit me to be your guardian angel, you know how near I should be to you. But, after all, there is greater comfort for you than that—better go at once to Jesus. He says, ‘ Come unto me all ye that labour and are

heavy laden :’ there is no doubt there. You are sure of Jesus ; keep close to Him, mamma. Do not go to any lower consolation, Christ’s own presence will be the best comfort. That chapter of Hamilton’s Lectures which you read to me on Sunday will be a great help to you ; read it when you feel desolate. ‘ Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’ Think of that, mamma ! Do fetch the book now, and read it once more to me.”

We read for the last time together his favourite chapter, with its beautiful description of the child in the storm falling asleep with the tear yet on his eyelash, beneath the soothing sound of his mother’s cradle-hymn ; and as I closed the book Willy repeated,—“ As one whom his mother comforteth, so may God comfort you, my dear mamma ! Thank God ! I know what both those comforts are.”\*

He dozed for some time, and then said,—“ If I never see Martin again, I pray that he may be kept from evil. I have only one anxiety about him. He is a good boy, as the saying is, but I hope, with his peculiar turn of mind and talents, he will be very careful not to argue about simple Bible truths. When he and I have talked about matters of this

\* *Mount of Olives.* See p. 134.

sort together, I have feared whether he was not more ready to start difficulties than to receive truths into his heart. Have I said anything hard or judging? I don't mean it in that spirit now, but I know very well it has been one of *my* temptations to be censorious and dogmatical: you have often told me so: but with death so near, I hope there is none of that spirit left, while I would not flinch from speaking plainly of these things. God has been very merciful to me in these matters. I have never had much trial in the way of doubts and difficulties in points of doctrine: but, then, I am not clever, you know; and I have always been so dependent on the simple elementary points of faith for comfort, I never dare let them go. Tell him" (and he spoke with great earnestness), "tell Martin my dying entreaty to him is, that he would never *play* with truth, Bible truth above all. I have done so in my time, but whenever I have begun to pick it to pieces, as it were, Satan has come in and scattered the good seed all about. It seems a sign to the Tempter to come when he sees us thus question and reason on matters which we ought to believe; for, after all, we must, the cleverest as well as the dullest, receive the kingdom of heaven as little children. There are not two ways of believing. Last week, when I first had that suffocating feeling

come on, I really thought I was dying; and when my breath seemed going I could just catch at a single text, and it was quite enough: 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' I knew I was a sinner, but at that moment I knew, too, that I believed on Jesus, and I was happy. Ah! I have been very weak in faith many times, and this is the reason, I suppose, why God has fed me with milk and not with strong meat. A few weeks ago I got unhappy about the doctrine of election, but, after all, I need not be so. I am certain of Christ's love to me; I know there is no reason why He should have loved me, and I am sure that He will never cast any one out who goes to Him as I have been obliged to go, as a sinner needing a Saviour. Ah, mamma, it need never trouble you personally: if you only feel you cannot be happy either here or hereafter without Jesus, this is sign enough that you are His. I could not be happy without Christ, even if I had *your* love; so, as I am sure Christ put that love in my heart, I know I am His."

After a few minutes' rest, he began questioning me as to the distance of Oxford, and the time it would take Martin to get to him. Many tender messages to his grandmother and aunts followed.

“Tell grandmamma I am going home before her,” he said; “but I feel it is going home.” We then began to talk of his early religious history, especially of his conflict at Southend. I was rather surprised to hear him confess how little he was actuated by religious principle before that time. “You judged,” he said, “by my liking to go to church, and to hear instruction on such things; but that is no sign. Perhaps my heart was getting ready, as it were, for the good seed to take root. I used to like going to church; the prayers always seemed to move me, and sermons I liked or not, just as it happened. If Mr. C——, for instance, at Ventnor, preached instead of Mr. V——, I scarcely listened. Yet both of these men brought the same message from God. Ah, I knew all about Christ even then, but I did not know *Him*.”

After a little more conversation, he introduced the subject of perversion, and spoke very tenderly of ——, who had recently seceded to the Church of Rome. The message which he sent him was deeply affecting; it was given with a childish modesty and simplicity, yet with considerable power and clearness. “I wish him to know,” he said, “how very, very happy I am. I have never repented the act of baptism, and I must always be grateful to him for

putting it before me when he did." He then spoke feelingly of ——'s bodily affliction, and of the peculiar bond which, on that account, there appeared to have been between them. "You must not think," he added, "that because I have not talked about ——, or expressed my sorrow at the change he has made, that I have not felt it; but I never could join in such remarks as I have heard made about him. I had rather pray for those who are in error and deceived, than judge them or call them hypocrites. I *have prayed* for him. I wonder if he is happy! Oh, I wish I could see him, and tell him how sufficient I, a weak, sinful boy, feel the intercession of Christ at this moment. I am so sure that if Jesus prays for me all will go well. How should I need any other Intercessor?" He closed his eyes, and lay still while his lips moved in prayer. Suddenly he said, "Get you fast hold of that Intercessor, dear mamma. 'He *ever* liveth.'"

The record of this evening is concluded in a letter to his grandmother, as follows:—"Dear Willy must never try to walk up-stairs again. Miss Smith was much alarmed at the effect which the effort had upon his breathing. His power of regaining his breath seemed all but gone; his face was livid, and he evidently thought himself dying, but was very

calm. When he had rallied, and was settled in bed, he said, 'Death is a solemn prospect when it comes near, but not dreadful to those who feel Jesus near.'"

He then asked for a short story, which he only partially remembered as being told to him one summer evening at Boulogne, when we were together looking at the outline of the white Dover cliffs across the blue Channel. It is scarcely worth repeating here in detail; but the moral appeared to convey great comfort to Willy, especially the promise that he should be met on the other side of Death's narrow stream. "I have been thinking a great deal of the other side," he said. "I believe I shall find Jesus there, as the poor girl found her father waiting; and I must keep Him in view. I hope, though, I shall not be left to cross alone; I am half afraid of that crossing. It seems a solemn thought that we must die *alone*. You see, even Faithful could not really help Christian when they were in the river. 'He had much ado to keep his head above water.' No one has died to tell us what it is. Oh, mamma! think of something to strengthen me."

"*Christ* has died, dear Willy. Think of the words of your favourite *Te Deum*: 'When Thou



hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.' ”

He smiled faintly, asked for the Pilgrim's Song, beginning—

“ My rest is in heaven, my rest is not here,”

and while I was repeating it in a low voice he fell asleep.\*

\* PILGRIM'S SONG.

“ My rest is in heaven, my rest is not here ;  
Then why should I tremble when trials are near ?  
Be hush'd, my dark spirit, the worst that can come  
But shortens thy journey and hastens thee home.

It is not for me to be seeking my bliss,  
And fixing my hopes, in a region like this ;  
I look for a city which hands have not piled,  
I pant for a country by sin undefiled.

The thorn and the thistle around me may grow,  
I would not lie down among roses below :  
I ask not a portion, I seek not a rest,  
Till I find it for ever in Jesus's breast.

Let death then, and danger, my progress oppose,  
They only make heaven more sweet at the close :  
Come joy or come sorrow, whate'er may befall,  
An hour with my God will make up for them all.

With a scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,  
I'll march on in haste through an enemy's land :  
The road may be rough, but it cannot be long ;  
I'll smooth it with hope, and I'll cheer it with song.”

The rest was but short, however; violent coughing came on, and he said, "I believe, mamma, I am come to the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Like Christian, 'I am confounded with all I see and hear. It is as a wilderness, a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death.'\* Oh, yes, I feel that very true. I was going through all this even last night. I dare say I cried out, for you came to me, and the words which you said were just what I wanted: 'When I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' And thus really God soon turned this shadow of death into the morning."

Again he dozed, and I still sat by him, fearing to withdraw my hand. Again he started up saying, "The River!"

\* The passage in *The Pilgrim's Progress* to which Willy referred, is as follows:—"One thing I would not let slip. I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded that he did not know his voice; and thus I perceived it. Just when I was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian more to it than anything he had met with before, even to think that he should now blaspheme Him that he so much loved before. Yet, if he could have helped it, he would not have done it; but he had not the discretion either to stop his ears, or to know from whence those blasphemies came."

Ah, as I sat beside this dying child of God I felt, as I had never felt before, the power of the word when applied by His Holy Spirit! With Willy it acted as a charm. No sooner did I say, "When thou passest through the waters *I will* be with thee," than he quickly replied,—

"God says this; it *must* be true. Thank you. You see, like Peter, I only looked at the water. Oh, how wonderful it is that you can always fix on the very words to comfort me! I suppose it is because we are so truly one: is it not, mamma?"

Tears were the only reply, and the mother and son each felt how their souls were knit together. At last Willy whispered, as he threw an arm around me,—

"Mamma, there is One ready to come closer to your soul than ever I could come—Jesus, who never dies, never changes."

Truly I was gathering strength through Willy, was consoled by the comfort wherewith he was comforted, and violent grief was hushed in the presence of one who was so close to God as was my child. On hearing the clock strike five he said,—

"Can I really have been so selfish as to keep you out of bed, dear mamma, so long? The Sunday bells will soon be ringing. Go back and try to

sleep. Dear mamma, there won't be many more watching-nights for you, nor weary ones for me; but there shall be no night for *me*, and when you are sad and wakeful think of my text, 'Rest in the Lord.'”

About seven he sank into a quiet sleep, and struck with the improvement in his breathing, I went to his bedside to listen. It was so quiet. He smiled as he partially opened his eyes and murmured something; the words I caught were, “Never out of your thoughts.” At nine Miss Smith went to his bedroom, scarcely expecting that he would wish to rise, but he said, with a cheerful glance at me,—

“Oh, yes, I shall like to have *one* more quiet Sunday morning with mamma. She will be at home, I know.”

“One more?” I echoed, for he looked easier and refreshed, and breathed more comfortably.

“One at a time, dear mamma,” was the reply.

The exertion of dressing again brought on a difficulty in respiration, and his cough was violent and wearing. It needed not my boy's lips to tell me, as I received him in the drawing-room, that the last Sunday might indeed have dawned. His kind attendant's eyes were full of tears as she told me of the patient suffering she had just witnessed; his gentle and tender manner of receiving her services had

something so marked in it. "He seemed so solemn, too," she observed, "as if he was doing everything for the last time," pausing more than once during dressing to listen to the bells; yet remembering each one of his accustomed Sunday-morning habits, gathering together his Bible, Church Service, and Bishop Wilson's *Sacra Privata*, with the *Invalid's Hymn Book*, of which he had become very fond.

As I stood to welcome him to the room he must have caught the anxious expression on my face, for he at once came up to kiss me, and using a few words of child-like endearment, he tried to smile; but we both felt alike at that moment that the "air was laden with farewells to the dying," and while I busied myself in preparing his breakfast, he sank back into his chair, drew his hand across his eyes, and we kept silence.

We cannot better conclude this chapter than with a few passages from one of Willy's favourite books, *The Mount of Olives*, the words copied being those to which he had often listened with deep attention and untiring interest:—

"The presence of Christ can turn a dark night into a night much to be remembered. Perhaps it is time to be sleeping; but the November wind is out, and as it riots over the misty hills, and dashes

the rain-drift on the rattling casement, and howls like a spirit distracted in the fireless chimney, it has awakened the young sleeper in the upper room. And when his mother enters, she finds him sobbing out his infant fears, or with beating heart hiding from the noisy danger in the depths of his downy pillow. But she puts the candle on the table, and sits down beside the bed ; and as he hears her assuring voice, and espies the gay comfort in her smiling face, and as she puts her hand over his, the tear stands still upon his cheek, till it gets time to dry. And, perhaps, she ends it all with breathing a mother's prayer, or he drops asleep beneath the cradle-hymn.

“And why describe all this? Because there is so much practical divinity in it. In the history of a child, a night like this is an important night, for it has done three things. It has explained some things which, unexplained, would have been a source of constant alarm—perhaps the germ of superstition or insanity. It has taught some precious lessons—sympathy for sufferers, gratitude for mercies, and perhaps some pleasant thought of Him who is the hiding-place from the storm, and the covert from the tempest. Then for the parallel: ‘As one whom his mother comforteth, so the Lord comforteth His people.’



## CHAPTER VIII.

THE breakfast was placed before him by Miss Smith as usual, but there was a little impatience in the movement of his hand as he signed to me to remove it. On seeing, however, the look of concern on both our faces, he tasted the coffee, but it brought on a fit of coughing, and on my returning to the room, which I had left to see if there were any chocolate ready for him, he said,—

“ Oh, don’t look so hopeless ; I did try to eat, to please you and Miss Smith. Yes, it is all very nice : but, indeed, eating would choke me ; my throat is so sore. Come,” he continued, “ you will be late for church, Miss Smith ; and I shall have mamma. So now, mamma, let us have our nice reading.”

He took his own Prayer-book as usual, and I read him short portions of the Service, as well as the Psalms for the day, with the Gospel and Epistle, and he seemed bright and attentive, asking in addi-



tion for a little of the Litany, in the responses of which he joined fervently.

When the book was closed, Willy said,—

“We have had some very happy Sundays together, especially of late.”

“And are they really come to an end, dear Willy?”

“I think so—it would be wrong to say otherwise now. You will miss me, but Jesus can fill up the blank, and every blank. I have kept a great many things to name this morning, and I must say them now that I feel a little stronger. I may not be able many days. I feel as if my lungs were almost useless. One thing I want to tell you. You were mistaken, I believe, in the reason of my looking so mournful, as you called it, over those chrysalides Mrs. A—— sent me from Hastings: but I was not sad, quite the reverse. As I held them in my hand, dull, senseless things as they are, I thought of the change which would come over me before they became butterflies; and such glad thoughts of the resurrection came at the same time, mamma, it was anything but grief till I looked up and saw your sad face. I am afraid about you. I cannot help it. Ours has been no common mother-and-child love, has it? It has been a friendship. I believe I

always told you everything; sometimes I may have seemed too free in hinting to you things which I was afraid might not be right, but you always listened so kindly; and then you have come and generally told me all your little troubles."

Alluding to a small domestic annoyance, he said,—

"I thought yesterday, when you named to me . . . how I hoped you would not fail to take all your little trials to Christ now. I fancy this is why we don't bear such things well, we try to get on without Christ's help. Where is it said, 'Casting *all* your care upon Him, for He careth for you?'

"I remember you once telling me a little anecdote, which, as you told it, sounded almost droll, but, even then—it was while we were in London—I was struck with the truth at the bottom of it. It was something a good lady once said to your papa, about the reason of our not bearing little troubles so well as great ones. Do you remember?"

"No, I have quite forgotten."

"Well, I will remind you. This lady had been very angry with her gardener, for having mismanaged a green-house, and killed some plants with heat, when others had lost theirs by the frost; and some days after she had a much more serious

trial, which did not put her out at all. And why? Why, because the greater trouble she had taken to Jesus, and the smaller trouble she had not thought of asking for patience to bear aright. But if we think a little, you know, mamma, our great troubles must seem light to Him who sees the end from the beginning; and I am very sure that we cannot bear the least any more than the greatest, without Christ's help."

As I sat holding his hand he pressed it earnestly, as though to ask for a response. At last I said, "I am afraid I do cling to you still."

"Well," he answered, in the pitying tone a father might use to a child, "*I know* you do; but Jesus knows it, too. Ask him to unloose your love a little, ask Him to make you willing. Why, mamma, what but the power of His grace could have made me willing to give you up? He only knew how I loved you, how I love you still; but I love my Saviour better,—not you *less*, but Christ *MORE*. I am going to Him very soon—before another Sunday, I think. Kneel down, mamma, now, and let us ask God together to make you willing."

There were no uttered words in that solemn struggle of the soul, as the heart of each went up in silent prayer for help; but One there was with those

worshippers, whose presence was strength and help, and when, after some minutes' silence, I repeated at Willy's request the Lord's Prayer, I could feel as well as say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

The farewell to life and hope was said, and I felt prepared to follow my child to the entrance of the life everlasting. He seemed inclined to talk, although he looked much exhausted, and I therefore took up a beautiful edition of George Herbert, whose quaint and simple lines had long been favourite Sunday reading with Willy. After reading the familiar verse on "Grace," commencing—

"My stock lies dead, and no increase,"

he asked for the last verse to be repeated,—

"Oh, come! for Thou dost know the way.  
Or if to me Thou wilt not move,  
Remove me where I need not say—  
Drop from above."

"How exactly that says what I feel!" he remarked, and then asked for the lines on "Sunday," commencing—

"O day most calm, most bright."

I thought he was tired, but he took the book in his own hands, and after reading for a few moments

to himself, he gave it to me open at "The Sacrifice," in which poem each verse closes with the Saviour's appeal,—

" Was ever grief like mine ? "

I read it to him slowly, and there was no remark on either part, until we came to the concluding verses, which were so full of meaning to him that I copy them in the belief that, to some suffering one who has not access to the volume, they may speak, as they did to Willy, words of comfort and instruction. The lines on which he made especial comment, and which he begged to have repeated again and again, are as follows,—

" Lo ! here I hang, charged with a world of sin.  
The greater world o' the two ; for that came in  
By words, but this by sorrow I must win :  
Was ever grief like mine ?

Such sorrow, as if sinful man could feel,  
Or feel his part, he would not cease to kneel,  
Till all were melted, though he were all steel.  
Was ever grief like mine ?

But, O my God, my God ! why leav'st Thou me,  
The Son in whom Thou dost delight to be ?  
My God, my God—

Was ever grief like mine ? "

Tears were in Willy's eyes as I looked up, and with a face of earnest, thoughtful expression, he said,

“Well, mamma, I think it an honour to be made a little—just a little—partaker of Christ’s sufferings; it makes me hope: it is one sign, I think, that I have some part with Him! ‘If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him! If we deny Him, He will also deny us.’ Ah! better suffer than deny, mamma!”

“Yes, dear Willy; and however sharp the suffering may be, we have the assurance that it is not ‘worthy to be compared with the glory that shall follow.’”

“No; I believe that it is ‘a weight of glory.’ I cannot think of anything, mamma, but of the sufferings of Christ. I always did think that 22d Psalm a wonderful prophecy. I should like, if I am strong enough, to hear a little of Stevenson’s *Christ on the Cross*.\* Oh, what wonderful love! And yet the actual sufferings of Christ are not to me so very astonishing, as the fact of His suffering for *sinner*s.”

“You mean, it is not so much the suffering as those for whom the suffering was borne, that is wonderful; as St. Paul says, ‘God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.’”

“Yes, exactly so: we may well say, ‘We love

\* *Christ on the Cross; an Exposition of the 22d Psalm.* By the Rev. John Stevenson, D.D.

Him because He first loved us.' Oh, I am so happy when I think how soon I shall see Him! Yes, it is all well."

And he quoted two lines of a hymn, a favourite of mine, commencing,—

" Through the love of Christ our Saviour,  
All, all is well ;"

asking for the last verse,—

" We expect a bright to-morrow,  
All will be well ;  
Faith can sing, thro' days of sorrow,  
All, all is well.  
On our Father's love relying,  
Jesus every need supplying,  
Or in living or in dying,  
All must be well."

The cough now interrupted continuous conversation, and he seemed a good deal exhausted. The voices of his brother and sisters being now heard in the garden on their return from chapel, he roused himself from a short slumber, and said, in answer to a " hush " on my part,—

" Oh, they don't disturb me ! I like to hear their voices—Agnes' laugh is so merry ; but—*one* voice I miss—dear Martin's. It was such a happy sound when he came in from school. Shall I ever hear it again ? "

He did not take his usual place at the dinner-

table on this day, feeling that he was unable to walk, or to eat anything if he tried.

“It is almost my first absence,” he whispered to me, as I kissed him before joining the family. “I left it until to-day, thinking it would be sad for you to see neither of your sons—neither Martin nor me; but I knew A—— would be in my place as he is here to-day. I believe he will be a great comfort to you in many ways, and perhaps——”

“Never fill your place, Willy—no one can come near that.”

“I was not going to say that, it would be cruel. No one, I believe, will ever be quite what I have been to you; but God does not mean, I believe, when He takes away those we love, too well, perhaps, to have their places in our hearts filled by any but Himself. I am very anxious, mamma, that you should remember this; and, while I am sure you won’t turn away from sympathy, still, I want you to go to the Fountain of Consolation, and not to stop short at little streams. It seems like a dishonour to Christ if we go and carry our burden to any one else, when He says, ‘Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.’”

“I will try and remember this, Willy, for I know the danger.”



“Yes; but you must not think this *advice*, mamma: it is only sympathy. You once read me some pretty lines of Browning’s on Consolation.”

I read them over to him again, and I saw at once their adaptation:—

“All are not taken—

There are left behind  
 Living beloveds, tender looks to bring  
 And make the daylight still a happy thing;  
 And tender voices to make soft the wind.  
 But if it were not so, if I could find  
 No love in all the world for comforting,  
 Nor any path but hollowly did ring,  
 Where dust to dust the love from life disjoined,  
 And if before those sepulchres unmoving  
 I stood alone as some forsaken lamb  
 Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth,  
 Crying, ‘Where are ye, O my loved and loving?’  
 I know a voice would sound,  
     Daughter, *I Am!*  
 Can I suffice for heaven and not for earth?”

Miss Smith carried some egg beaten up with wine, which his cousin wished him to try; but the effort of swallowing had become very painful, and he had a sensitive shrinking from the cough and sickness, which taking food or medicine too often produced. After dinner he continued very feverish and ill, and seemed depressed. There was plainly some struggle between the flesh and the

spirit, and his expression was one of anxiety and distress. He remarked, rather sadly, on the alteration, and said,—

“I felt so willing to go last night, and to bear all God sent me. Now, this afternoon I feel the time long, and I am half afraid.”

I read him the Pilgrim's Song, “My rest is in heaven,” and he seemed soothed, and slept quietly for a short time. In the evening I was again left with him alone, to enjoy that precious communion of spirit now so rapidly drawing to its close. He appeared drowsy, though he held his Bible open, and occasionally turned over its leaves to find some promise or some prayer suited to his need. Once or twice, after he had lain with his eyes closed, and I asked if he had slept, he said,—

“Oh, no! I have been praying for you.”

He appeared almost too tired to go through the Psalms or Lessons—a text or two being as much as he could bear. Twice he asked for the same Collect, and quickly perceiving that I noticed it he said,—

“It is so exactly what I want.”

“Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens, so we may also in heart and mind thither

ascend, and with Him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen."

There seemed nothing like reading to calm the anxious restlessness which the bodily suffering occasioned. He would often ask plaintively, even as a child for its mother's lullaby, for a repetition of the same verse, the same prayer, and the same hymn. Three times in the course of that memorable Sunday evening I repeated those beautiful lines of Montgomery, "For ever with the Lord!" which with another favourite appeared to soothe him when all else failed.

" 'For ever with the Lord !' "

Amen ! so let it be :

Life from the dead is in that word,

'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,

Absent from Him I roam,

Yet nightly pitch my moving tent

A day's march nearer home.

My Father's house on high,

Home of my soul, how near,

At times, to faith's aspiring eye,

Thy golden gates appear.

' For ever with the Lord !' "

Father, if 'tis thy will,

The promise of that gracious word,

E'en here, to me fulfil.

Be thou at my right hand,  
Then shall I never fail ;  
Uphold me, and I needs must stand ;  
Fight, and I shall prevail.

So when my latest breath  
Shall rend the vail in twain,  
By death I shall escape from death,  
And life eternal gain.

Knowing as I am known,  
How shall I love that word !  
And oft repeat before the throne,  
' For ever with the Lord ! ' "

It was evident that there was a conflict within ; but occasionally he looked up and responded sweetly to any expression of love : and once, on my saying,—

“ Oh, Willy dear, I love you so much, it seems I cannot do without you.” He said,—“ Yes, I know you do : but oh, give more love to Jesus when I am gone. I shall not only love Him best then, you know, but He will be all in all to me.”

His dear father came in about eight, and spent the quiet hour before bed-time with his dying child. He was some time before he could settle for the night, and I sat beside him until past twelve. Sometimes the breathing was greatly oppressed, and the pillows failed to support the back, whilst permitting the position to be sufficiently upright for respiration. Once or twice he cried out piteously, “ Oh dear,

can I bear it?" And then, "I am so afraid of getting impatient." But the restlessness and the fear were calmed at once by the whisper of promised help from God. "As thy day so shall thy strength be." "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Fear not, for I am with thee." These were the strong consolations of God's word applied by the Spirit to the heart, as he passed through those waters, in which many a Christian has cried, "Lord, save, or I perish."

*Monday, November 1st.*—The night had been passed more quietly than had been anticipated during the early part of the evening; but on going to his bedside when day had dawned, both Miss Smith and I remarked a considerable change in his appearance. His features were sharpened, and the hands looked almost transparent. As soon as he came down-stairs he seemed anxious to be alone with me, and after sending away his breakfast almost untasted, he said, "I am going home very fast, mamma. What I now want to say to you had better be said very soon—*to-day*, I think. Read me the morning Psalms, please, and then the Collect for All Saints' Day. I was looking for that Collect before I came down, and, dear mamma, when the year comes round—the Church year, I mean—you must think of me as having long been among those

unspeakable joys which God has prepared for those who love Him."

After the peaceful service was over, he at once began to speak of the distribution of his little possessions. "This is better done now," he said, "*at once.*" I have but little money to trouble me; still, if there is enough in my purse, and you think it worth while, send a sovereign to Mr. Pollock for the new church. If it only helps to place a stone I shall be glad; and you will, I hope, worship God there. I have not often been to this church; but the few times I have were such happy times, and the last I shall never forget, nor the last communion with you and dear papa. I did really think, though that is some weeks ago, that it was my last; and oh! how I did pray that you and I—that we three—might one day meet where we should require no outward symbols of bread and wine, no warning to *remember* Jesus. Think, when next you go, mamma, of the blessedness which, I trust, will be mine then, and don't weep for me more than you can help . . . . . Now about my little treasures. They are all yours, you know; but I advise you to keep very few. My Bible, my dear Bible, I leave to little Frank. Dear baby, he won't remember me, and I have so loved him that it seems sad; but give

him the Bible, and tell him then that his brother Willy found his way to heaven in that very book. Dear little Frank! but [with a sob] I cannot talk of him. This," he said, taking up his Church Service, which had been given to him by a dear aunt on the day of his baptism, "is very dear to me. I scarcely ever look at it but it seems to recall my baptismal vows. It ought to be yours, for there is scarcely anything I value so much; but I wish to give it to A——, if I may. He has been such a kind brother to me. If he knew how I valued it, he would know how I feel to him."

He then mentioned several other possessions separately, that he wished his relatives and friends to have; but, seeing the weight of sorrow on his mother's face, he said, "Never mind; you will do all for the best, and do it soon after I am gone. It will be hard for you to sit and turn over my things. Oh, dear mamma, God comfort you! I am always praying *that*, when I see that sad look. Yes, I know [in answer to the silent tears]; I see what it will be. You have not nursed me through this long illness, without my seeing how you live a sort of double life—one life folded up, as it were, in mine; but this could not have lasted without doing harm, in some way. You have given up your whole time

so to my service. I was thinking the other day how few visits you pay, how little change you have had: but this is not exactly a healthy thing for you, and I am not sure that it has not got to be a sort of idolatry; and the idols,—you know what God says of them. Oh, dear mamma, don't let it be so any longer. Give me up freely, and don't let your dead child come between you and Christ. It may be that this loss will be just the thing to raise you — ‘the cross that raiseth.’ Ah, well, if it but brings you nearer to God, you will learn to love it. We must all bear the cross in some way, if we are servants of the cross. Some have pain and weakness of body; this has been my cross; others have sorrow for others' pain; this has been yours. But if they have brought you and me nearer to God, we shall never complain, in another world, of its being too heavy.”

A long silence, as the cough became violent; when it seemed as if the shock must indeed utterly destroy the frail tabernacle. “Look up for help,” he said, when, opening his eyes, he saw my anxious face. He then sent a message of love to his dear cousin W——, his kind Fairfield companion. “I am so glad,” he said, “I sent for him last week. I wish I could have conquered my difficulty in talking on religion, and I should have said one or two



things to him. I pray God he may be kept from the evil of the world. His dangers will be from without, as well as from within. I have been saved many of the former; but it wants God's grace for either battle. My love to him: I hope I shall meet him in heaven." And then, turning round on his chair and laying both hands on my shoulders, as I sat on a low stool by his side, he said, "And you, mamma, dear mamma, what can I say to you for your kind, patient nursing? such a long service, and I often so fretful and wayward and impatient: how could I have lived through these years without my mother? Ah, thank God I have never been called to part with you, and to be left behind without you. When we all thought you so near death at Ventnor, I remember we were out one afternoon about that time on the sea, with grandmamma, and we were likely to have been all drowned, owing to the boatman, an old, dull rower, striking the little boat we were in on a rock under water, and we were very nearly upset. I recollect then being able to feel a sort of half-satisfaction in knowing I should not be left in the world without you. I don't tell you this because it was right of me to have felt so — since I have loved Jesus, I have known that He would be sufficient to make up for every loss — but just to show you

how necessary you were to my happiness. Why, your voice has been the greatest comfort to me from morning to night. It seemed when you were ill, and I missed your step and your loving look and words, that the whole house was under a cloud. I tell you this, that you may see how important a thing your health is, and how I entreat you to be careful of it for the children's sake. I believe I have sometimes spoken improperly when I have seen you run foolish risks, and appeared cross when I have only been very, very anxious; for it does seem, even now, as if I could not bear the thought of life without you. Ah, but no wonder; you have so entered into my trials! That boy, Joe White, in *Emilie the Peacemaker*, did not rebel more against his affliction than I did when first God sent it to me. I wished to die, just as he did; and I believe, but for your patient love, and papa's kindness, always the same, without change, I should have been a wretched, pining, miserable, wicked boy, a burden to myself and every one else. The first thing that comforted me was the knowledge that you shared in my grief. Your sympathy that day when we came home from Fitzroy Square comforted me. Your tears did me more good than a lecture. I saw, as I have seen many a time since, how different it is to feel *for*

and to feel *with* a person. But you have had a great deal to bear with me. I have had unreasonable fancies about eating, and I must often have seemed ungrateful to the cook, I am afraid. I am so sorry now: though it is a great temptation to sick people to be dainty: I wish I had striven against it. I have done so lately, indeed. Mind you tell cook what I say. Where there is no real appetite, it is hard to appear content over the greatest delicacies. But I might have tried to check discontent: the want has been generally in my taste, not in the cookery. What alleviations I have had! So many people to be kind to me, wherever I have been. I have often thought, when flowers or fruit came for me, that I did not deserve them. But my home mercies, they have been countless! Oh, my dear papa! Few boys have had such a father. If he has had less time with us than some fathers, he has been a great blessing. He sets such a good example. He has been very useful to me. I think his calm, clear way of looking at truth, is not very common. Then, he is so stable: I always look at that part of his character as so important, especially in his position. There is no shifting in him, no running after novelties. When I was a little boy, I remember I used to think him perfection, and was always angry if

any one ventured to speak of him as wrong, or even mistaken. Since I have been older, I still think I would rather take his judgment than anybody's. Remember, mamma, he will want a little comfort: in his way, he will miss me. It will grieve him very much if you fret for me unduly. Be more to him than ever. Try and comfort one another.

“ It is a great blessing, that as his duty lies so much away from home, your duty, and pleasure too, keep you at home. Oh, I do pity the children of visiting mothers! I don't believe such mothers can tell what their children endure in their absence sometimes. When you went out, too, you took care that we were left under proper management, and with suitable persons. It has been a good thing for us all, Anne and Car. [two faithful servants], coming when I was so young. I believe, if there are one or two really good servants, no others can be very bad. I never learned a wrong thing from them, nor saw them do anything to the little ones which they would not if you had been there. One other thing, mamma, has been a great blessing to us—your preventing evil. It is a good saying for the nursery, ‘Prevention is better than cure.’ I think this is why you have not had recourse to great punishments. I can remember so many instances

in which you saved us from faults by guarding us from temptation. I am sure, whatever other children may require, that the law of kindness is the only one which could have managed me. You might not know it, but no beating, no shutting up in a room, nor any punishment whatever, would have cost me such agony as to see you or papa really sorry and grieved. If there was any sharp, quick speaking, I never cared; but when you looked as only you can look when you are sorry, it was dreadful to bear: but then, I loved you so!

“Once at Reigate—I could still almost cry at the thought, but I would rather not remind you of what the fault was—when you reproved me, I answered improperly and disrespectfully, and encouraged Martin to do the same. I know you have a quick temper sometimes to other people, and I felt half frightened afterwards, for I never was quite so naughty to you; it seemed as if Martin and I had got reckless. It was just after your long illness. It was after dinner, and you only said, gravely, ‘Oh, Willy!’ and went out of the room. It was nearly an hour before you came back, and as you passed my chair you stooped down to kiss me, but you did look so unhappy! I saw you had been crying, and I thought, ‘Perhaps I have made her

cry!’ and then I remembered that most likely you had been praying for me too, and that quite softened me so. I ran up-stairs, and asked God to forgive me for grieving such a mother. But my prayer did little good then. I knew the duty of prayer, and I dare say, so far as form went, I put up prayer in the right way; but I had not come to feel that of myself I could do *nothing*. I seemed to have a holding back—a sort of notion that I could make myself more worthy of salvation by some efforts of my own.”

The subject of his offences against those he loved seemed to weigh somewhat heavily at this time.

“I know,” he said, “God has forgiven me for Christ’s sake; but I feel so sorry to think of the many pettish, cross things I have said to servants, and my brothers and sisters, too.”

He was quite unable to shake off his depression, and said,—

“It seems to me, mamma, that I have been all my life long receiving all and giving nothing in return. I have had gifts, and kindnesses, and favours; and, after all, what have *I* done to deserve them? I have not even received them gratefully, as I ought; although, lately, I have felt less inclined to take things as matters of course. When

Mrs. D—— sent me all those grapes from Knutsford, and Mrs. H—— more on the same day, I did feel almost overcome with so much kindness, and I can never do anything for any one now. Perhaps I might have done more. Well, I must feel I am nothing. Saved by Christ alone—no merit, nothing to plead. ‘Just as I am, without one plea,’ so I must go to Christ.”

## CHAPTER IX.

**CLOSING HOURS OF MONDAY—REMARKS ON PREACHING—VALUE  
OF THE BIBLE—SORROW FOR PAST ERRORS—TENDERNESS  
TO HIS PARENTS—BRIGHT HOPES OF HOME—THE WISH  
FULFILLED—THE BROTHERS MEETING.**

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“ I know not the way I am going,  
But well do I know my Guide :  
With a child-like trust I give my hand  
To the mighty Friend by my side.

The only thing that I say to Him  
As He takes it is, ‘ Hold it fast !’  
Suffer me not to lose my way,  
And bring me home at last.”





## CHAPTER IX.

THE afternoon was much less trying than the earlier part of the day had been, and there was less distress of mind, although reference was again made to past sins of omission and commission. Once, indeed, seeing me look anxious on hearing his accurate recollection of faults so long forgotten by me, he said, consolingly,—“Ah, mamma, the sin has lost its sting. I am not talking about these sins as if they were not forgiven. I know Christ’s blood has cleansed me from all sin. It is not that I am unhappy about them now, but my regret is lest I have done harm to the profession I made. Don’t be uneasy at all that I have said. That is not the effect it should have on you. You know, dear mamma, I love Christ now more than ever. I see how holy and how perfect *He* is, and it makes me full of gratitude and wonder that He would have me or love me. The more a Christian loves his Saviour,

the more he will hate sin, for it was sin that crucified Jesus. I may well say.—

“Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy Cross I cling :  
Sinful, to the fountain fly :  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die !”

He also mentioned the importance of reading or hearing the word in the right spirit—the spirit of little children—the *teachable* spirit, remarking how careless we were liable to get in the very manner of taking up our Bibles. Instead of remembering that in every page, every sentence, God’s voice was speaking to us, we were apt to take it up as we should a hymn-book or a poetry-book, to find something to our taste and feelings. I then read him a favourite chapter from a little volume which had lately afforded him much comfort—the *Faithful Promiser*, and *Morning and Night Watches*. The dear boy’s memory seemed particularly retentive for all which had cheered and strengthened him in times past of need ; for he remembered, he said, my reading this to him at Ventnor, from the text, “God is love.” “The only real mystery of the Bible,” says an old writer, “is a mystery of love. ‘God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son’—what ! that for a lost and ruined world the Prince

of Life should leave the bosom on which He had been pillowed from all eternity ! ‘ God *so* loved the world.’ Man never can get farther in the solution of the wondrous problem. Think of that love *now* ! The live coals in the censer of old, a feeble type of the burning ardour of affection still manifested by our great High Priest.”

After I finished the passage, he said, “ Read me a little bit of George Herbert on the subject of hearing the word, mamma. Cowper has some very wise remarks, too, about preachers and preaching ; but I should like to have Herbert’s on hearing : that is what we have most to do with ; and I hope my brothers will bear that in mind when they are tempted to criticise.” He pointed out the following passage, which I then read :—

“ Judge not the preacher ; for he is thy judge.  
If thou mislike him thou conceivest him not ;  
God calleth preaching folly. Do not grudge  
To pick out treasures from an earthen pot,  
The worst speak something good ; if all want sense,  
God takes the text and preacheth patience.

Jest not at preacher’s language nor expression.  
How know’st thou but thy sinnes make him miscarry ?  
Then turn thy faults and his into confession.  
God sent him, whatsoe’er he be ; O tarry,  
And love him for his Master : his condition,  
Though it be ill, makes him no ill physician.”

HERBERT’S *Church Porch*.

The thoughts of past sin were still painful, as the notes of this day, hastily written down, record. There is also this remark:—

“He seems never to receive the most trifling service without an expression of humble unworthiness of our love.

“There is something quite touching in the tone of his voice, whether he accepts or declines an attention, when he says, ‘Oh, thank you! It is well for you that there is no prospect of my illness being a very long one;—it would wear you out. I often fear your disturbed nights, for such a long time past, will tell on you when I am gone, and you won’t be able to sleep when you might, and I shall not be here to whisper comfort to you as you have to me. Well, it is certain that the very same things which have done me the most good—verses out of the Bible, principally—may be your consolation as well as mine. For a long time past I have gone to sleep with some words, either out of one of the Psalms you read or some text you have given me to think of. For several nights just the words, ‘Thou art with me,’ have been sufficient. One word out of the best book is worth all the best people’s thoughts.

“ ‘Oh, you do not know what the Bible’s value is till you are weak, and ill, and dying, as I am! One

is driven up to it as to a rock for safety ; there is nothing sure but the Word of God !’

“ Again he stopped, and said,—‘ I have so often hung on you for advice, that it seems strange to be preaching like this to you. You must not think it is my old bad way come back. I don’t mean to teach—only to comfort.’ And then he apologised for his manner of speaking to myself and his father, as having been often unbecoming, lamenting a dogmatical way he had of expressing himself ; which, as he truly said, he thought had come gradually upon him from having been so much in the society of older people, and especially made my own friend and confidant. ‘ I know,’ he said, ‘ many people have noticed it, and no wonder ; but it has been from no want of veneration for you. I am glad you have told me of it as you have. Ah, I wish I had set my brothers and sisters a better example ! Since my baptism—that solemn, open profession of Christ—I have been often unwatchful. My happy baptismal day !—I have never repented that. I should like to have seen Martin make the same profession ; but I think God will hear my prayers for him—yes, and for them all.’

“ On hearing some little nursery disturbance, he said,—‘ It is better as it is, mamma ; you will have

time now to attend to the children. Pray labour with them, and bring them to me in heaven. I hope one is there'—alluding to the sister who died in infancy. The little brother, not yet two years old, came in, and for a short time Willy was much amused by his play, once or twice laughing at his baby frolics; but suddenly, as the child went up to caress him, he said, 'Oh, take him away! I cannot bear it. Strange that I dread parting with that baby! But I shall see Frank in heaven, I trust. I have prayed for him since his birth, and I do not think the prayer of faith can be in vain.'"

The remarks made by Willy are gathered from several conversations, at various intervals during the day; and it was remarkable how continuous they were, and how great his ability remained to express himself clearly and audibly, as well as without any trace of his natural reserve. Towards evening there was an increase of cough, and general feverishness and discomfort. His father carried him up to bed, and, seeing me look grieved at the necessity, and the signs of increased feebleness, Willy tried to smile, and said, fondly,—

"It is not the *first* time papa has carried me since I was a baby."

I watched by him until past midnight. He was

at first restless, and at times seemed to wander a little ; but the cough was quieter, and I lay down for a short rest. I was awakened by feeling his lips on my forehead. With a start I cried, — “ Oh, Willy, are you worse ? ”

“ No,” he answered ; “ but I thought I heard you sobbing. I am so sorry if I woke you, dear mamma ! I only came to ask you not to be so sorry, for I am very happy. I only feel as if I were going home.”

This little proof of filial love and tenderness has often since been recalled in the succeeding nights of weary weeping ; but, although the kiss of comfort, and the words of hope and tenderness, shall never cheer the mother’s aching heart, the truth which Willy whispered brings its consolation. He was then going home by a passage troublous, but short. *Now*, he is truly at home in a mansion prepared by better than mother’s love for those who are Christ’s.

I rose, and dressed hastily, for truly he looked as if he were going home ; and, struck with the sunken appearance of the features, I asked if he felt really worse ?

“ Weaker,” he replied. “ Not otherwise worse. When you are able, I wish you would read to me. I may sleep a little while you are at breakfast.”



And, offering me a little hymn-book which had been on his chair all night, he asked for one of Carey's Hymns, which, he said, so fully expressed his thoughts of home:—

“ One sweetly solemn thought  
Comes to me o'er and o'er—  
I am nearer home to-day  
Than I ever have been before.  
  
Nearer my Father's house,  
Where the many mansions be;  
Nearer the great white throne;  
Nearer the crystal sea;  
  
Nearer the bound of life,  
Where we lay our burdens down;  
Nearer leaving the cross;  
Nearer gaining the crown.  
  
But lying darkly between,  
Winding down through the night,  
Is the deep unknown stream  
That leads at last to the light.  
  
Jesus, perfect my trust,  
Strengthen the hand of my faith;  
Let me feel Thee near, when I stand  
On the edge of the shore of death.”

The selection from which this hymn is taken—Ryle's *Spiritual Songs*—was frequently Willy's companion and comfort in the closing hours of life.

*Tuesday.* Contrary to my expectation, he asked

to be dressed; and while Miss Smith, as usual, assisted him, a letter came from the Rev. W. J. Read, the clergyman who had baptized him, and for whom Willy always cherished a very tender regard. A little cross cut out of card-board was inclosed. It was placed against the window, that he might see the line of light that surrounded it. After looking at it earnestly for a few moments, he remarked,—

“ Ah, I always think of what Tyndal said: ‘ I worship not the cross, but Him who hangs thereon.’ ”

He was much exhausted, and no one could fail to mark the change on his pinched and sharpened features. He was, however, left for private prayer at his own desire, and remained longer than usual in his room—so long, indeed, that I once gently opened the door, and then marked, for the first time, that he sat. His hands were clasped; his eyes were meekly raised: I saw that he communed with the Father and the Son, and, closing the door, I left without observation. Fain would one know what was the subject of this, nearly the last prayer of the young Christian on the brink of Jordan.

We read the Psalms, as usual, and he spoke of a dulness in his feelings which distressed him.

“ I have got hold of one text, though,” he said :  
“ ‘ In the Lord put I my trust.’ ”

I pointed out another verse in the Morning Psalm (Ps. ix. 10), “ They that know thy name will put their trust in thee : for thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee.”

“ Now read that beautiful hymn, please, mamma, ‘ For ever with the Lord.’ I got to sleep with that last night :

‘ I nightly pitch my moving tent  
A day’s march nearer home.’

Ah ! I am, indeed, a day’s march nearer home, for which you must not be sorry—I am not.”

Soon after his medical man’s visit, he asked me for the *Railway Guide*, and I found him anxiously looking out the time of the Oxford trains. He inquired particularly what A—— thought of him, and told me his own impression was that he should not live above a day or two. Miss Smith then mentioning how heavily the burden of his dearest brother’s absence at this time pressed on him, on my return to Willy I proposed to telegraph the desire to his father. The cloud cleared away in a moment, as he gratefully replied,—

“ Oh, thank you ! Now I will be patient ; and if it is God’s will, I shall see him ; if not, you have

done all you can. I am quite willing to leave it. 'For ever with the Lord,'” he murmured occasionally. “No more clouds, no more coldness or forgetfulness—always with my Saviour. Oh, it is a happy prospect! I like this thought of Hamilton's,” and, after looking over the lecture that speaks of being absent from the body and present with the Lord, he read aloud: “So near is Jesus, that, like the infant waking from its dream, it looks up, and lo! the mother sits beside it—waking up from this life-dream, the first sight is Jesus as He is. At once the everlasting arms are the first resting-place of the disembodied soul—it will be in the bosom of Immanuel that the emancipated spirit will inquire, ‘Where am I?’ and read in the face of Jesus the answer, ‘For ever with the Lord!’—

‘For ever with the Lord!’

Amen! so let it be:

Life from the dead is in that word,

’Tis immortality.”

“Oh! mamma,” he added, “is there anything sad or gloomy in such thoughts? I feel them cheer me so; and when I am tired with pain and weakness, I just think of it as the *lighter* affliction which endureth but for a moment.”

He was now calm, even cheerful, and so far

rallied that he was able to enjoy a visit from Mr. Pollock at noon. The chapter selected at Willy's desire was the 53rd of Isaiah. I saw his earnest eyes filled with tears as the words of the Prophet, solemnly and beautifully read, fell on his listening ear,—“ Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ! ”

“ Oh ! ” he said, when the visit was over, “ I am so grateful for Mr. Pollock's call. I did feel every word of that chapter. He has made it seem clearer than ever. It is beautiful : please read it again, I want to get it quite settled in me. I have no doubts, now, of Christ ; and I am so thankful to have such a Saviour to ask to bear my sorrows.” Then tenderly added,—“ And He will bear *yours*, mamma. I hope I shall see Mr. Pollock again. If I do not, tell him, with my love, how pleasant and good his teaching has been to me. He has set me right on many things, and without my asking him. He has known just how to deal with me, and has not put me back by asking a number of questions—close questions, I mean. The idea that I am expected to say much always makes me reserved. I am so afraid, too, in religious conversation, of being drawn on to say more than I actually feel—of expressing what people want me to say, not

what I feel at the time. For instance, \* \* \* asked me one day if I felt that I loved Christ. Now, that was the sort of question so difficult to answer. I have not, of late, certainly, been so concerned to find out what amount of love I have to Jesus. I am so happy in knowing that Jesus loves *me*, and died to save me, that my loving Him follows of course; but it is no good to measure it, or dwell on it. Do you know, I am afraid to think of the amount of my love to Jesus. It disheartens me, and I know I shall never plead *that* when I get to heaven's gate. If I am admitted there, it will be not because of my love to Him, but because of His love to me."

After a few tender expressions had passed between us he said, "How precious Christ's sympathy is! 'In all our afflictions he is afflicted!' Oh, that beautiful verse, 'He hath carried our sorrows!' He does carry them. His sympathy is like your own, only more precious; and there is this difference—you know what I say and what you see of my sufferings. Christ knows all I feel. It is His human sympathy that I find such a help. He knows what pain of body is, such pain as I can never know; and He knows what death is."

His peace and comfort were somewhat clouded

by frequent callers ; and on one occasion, when I was detained for some little time by a friend, he told Miss Smith it was wrong to keep me, on my own account, being far from well ; “ and scarcely kind it seems to me,” he said, “ for I want her so ; every moment is precious.” On my return he said, “ Oh, the time is so short, don’t leave me again for long. I am longing for rest, mamma. I am come now to the point when, even for your sake, I do not wish to stay. Only for Christ could I leave you, but I long to be with Him.”

“ It will be but for a little while,” was the broken answer.

“ Perhaps so ; but do not wish to go until God’s time comes. He may have work for you to do, and nothing will hinder you from doing that work so much as wanting to leave it.”

“ I cannot help longing to follow you—to go with you, rather.”

“ Leave it with God, mamma : we shall meet one day, I hope, when we shall love one another better and God best of all. When we love Him perfectly our love must be pure. Think,” he added, “ of loving nothing but what God loves ! Think of seeing His face, of *seeing* Jesus face to face ! All will be love there, and I am soon going to the God of love.

It is a beautiful thought, that we shall be ever like Him, and see Him as He is.

“What madness it seems,” he continued, “to put off acquaintance with God till the time of sickness and death ! There is sure to be enough to distract and disturb the body then. Suppose, instead of being at peace with God, I had now to seek it ! But Jesus is my friend already, and I have only to go to Him as a friend, not as a stranger. \* \* \* said to me the other day, what a blessing it was for me that I had so early been put into the school of affliction. I believe affliction’s school may be a good place or not, according to the teacher we get there. For my part, I don’t believe people get educated for heaven by sorrow merely ; it leaves us where it finds us, or worse, if we do not sit at the feet of Jesus. Peter did not get any good in the storm till he got hold of Christ’s hand there. I know very well that this affliction of mine would never have educated me for heaven.”

He then slept a few moments, and as soon as he awoke looked at me steadily and said, “ ‘ Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father’s house are many mansions.’ Mamma, I am going to one of these. Does it seem unkind in me to say what Jesus did to His disciples, ‘ If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father ? ’ ”



The first copies of *Sunday Thoughts* were put in his hand, in the fly-leaf of one of which his papa had written his name. He looked at the book with pleasure, for many of its pages owed much of their interest to suggestions of his own : but soon he closed it with a sigh, and directed me to send one copy to Mrs. —, a lady who had been kind to him during his illness ; and the other he wished his little sister Agnes to possess, for he said, “ I shall not want *Sunday Thoughts* there.”

“ No,” some one remarked, “ they will all be Sunday thoughts in heaven.”

“ I think not,” he replied, with his natural quickness, “ for there will be no Sundays there ; no need of a day of rest in heaven. ‘ They rest not day nor night.’ Do not forget my message to — ; tell him that Christ is sufficient for me ; the way is so plain for the sinner to the Saviour, and through Him to God. There is no condemnation ; I am the chief of sinners, but Christ is a great Saviour. I need no mediator but Jesus. I suppose no one would think that it needed any intercession to induce God to save us at first. All seems so plain to me. God so loved us that He sent His Son. His Son so loved us that He was willing to die for our salvation. If God did that *great* thing without the pleadings of any saint or angel, how can we doubt His willingness to

give every other lesser thing through Him? Tell — this, that I, a sinful, dying boy, have no fear. I find Jesus my *all in all*.”

He was greatly exhausted, and remained silent for some time, occasionally expressing regret that I was so far from my mother and sisters; but, he added, “It may be better for you to go to Christ alone for comfort.”

His father being obliged to attend a meeting in Manchester, we had an evening alone in prospect, and he wondered, a little anxiously, how he could be carried to bed. Sickness and difficulty of breathing had returned, and the sufferings hourly increased. His kind medical attendant came between six and seven, and carried him up-stairs; but sore was Willy's disappointment to find that a professional engagement would in all probability prevent his close attendance on him for some hours. He was placed in an easy chair, and hot fomentations were applied to his chest with some temporary success; but he told Miss Smith how much he had hoped to have his cousin with him at the last. Seeing her tears he looked up at her tenderly, and said: “Why do you all grieve so? and I am so *happy*!” As she left the room he added, “You must be always kind to her: don't lose sight of her. She has been a true friend to me, and so patient: no one ever did

wait on me so much to my mind. I love her very much. I need not say, again, remember her for my sake, mamma !”

On her again expressing a wish that he could have had the presence of his cousin during this accession of suffering he said, in an almost inaudible voice, “ Ah ! I leave these little things with God ;” and in a lower whisper still he added, “ I well may, if I have trusted Him with my *soul*. Perhaps, too, it is better not to have any one to lean upon but my Saviour. I have trusted a good deal to the comfort and presence of A——, now I must simply rest in the Lord.”

“ I am not afraid,” he said, affectionately to Miss Smith, as he saw her mournful expression : “ mind, it is only the *body* in pain ; suppose it had been otherwise ?”

The friend to whose comforting, quiet manner, allusion has already been made in the pages which comprise Willy’s stay at Fairfield, had most unexpectedly come over for a few days’ visit to some relatives in our immediate neighbourhood. Willy did not know of her visit, and when the servant announced her, he looked brightly up and said, “ There, mamma ! don’t you recollect my saying that Lucy S—— was the sort of person I should like to have near me, if I were dying ? See how God takes care

of little things for us. I understood now the force of those words of Jesus, about the very hairs of our head being all numbered."

"But it may be too much for you to see her," I suggested.

"Not at all," he said: "let her come in, and directly."

Her own impressions of this interview are better given in her own words, in a letter to a friend:—

"I shall never forget his appearance as I drew near his little couch: his finely-chiselled features, on which the hand of Death had already set his unmistakeable seal, and his whole countenance beaming with a look of radiant joy, a look of bright expectation. As he raised himself a little on the pillows to welcome me, I could but look on him as an heir of glory, waiting at the portal of his long-promised and well-assured inheritance. He seemed, indeed, to see already that the closed doors were moving; and one might well imagine that this child of heaven even now perceived the angels on their way to bear him to the arms of his Father and God.

"There was an expression of holy joy, of trustful calm, rather than triumphant happiness, whilst his whole thoughts and conversation were as though he were parted from the earthly, his whole soul

seeming to be centred on things above, tasting by anticipation the untold joys of that home to which he was so rapidly passing.

“He at once alluded to my dear sister-in-law, whose society he had so greatly enjoyed at Fairfield, and spoke as confidently of reunion with her as though it were but to walk into another room to meet her. I parted from him, scarcely expecting to see him again on earth.”

During Lucy S——’s stay he did not talk very much. It was, as she expressed it, a kind of calm rejoicing in prospective rest, but rest near at hand; and when he asked her to read him the last chapter of Revelation, he begged her to pause a moment as he said, “No night there!—that seems a very sweet promise to me; but the best of all is, ‘The Lamb is in the midst, and shall lead us, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.’ I *long* for the time, and you and I shall both taste those joys, mamma, in God’s good time; but suffering first, you know. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. The cross first, then the crown. I leave the Collect, ‘Almighty God, who seest that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves,’ to you, dear mamma. May it comfort you as it has me! It has brought me help many times.”

A message was sent to his cousin, at midnight, to inform him of some change in Willy's symptoms. He said, a little piteously, "It is not his remedies I want, but I have something particular to say to him, and his voice is always a pleasure to me." On my return, after despatching a message to A——, Willy said, "Don't be disheartened, mamma, if I have to endure great struggles at last. This peace may not continue, you know; and if I say anything in my pain which leads you to suppose that I have lost faith in Jesus, don't dwell on it. I don't think it will be so. I do believe. I have not believed a fable, you know. I am very sure that Christ casts out none that come to Him. Perhaps I shall be unconscious; people usually are at the end."

About one o'clock, he said, "Call up papa; I feel sinking. This must be death." Some cream and a little brandy were given him: he took it patiently, but said, "I will take food as long as I can swallow, mamma; but please do not urge it when I decline. And, above all, be careful about stimulants. I want to be conscious while I can. Death is on me now," he said, looking at his hands and finger-nails. "I shall never see Martin again! Well, it is a trial and disappointment; but if it had been God's will, I should have seen him. Remember

my message ; tell him to keep close to Christ, and to first principles—not to be ashamed of Jesus.”

At two o'clock \* \* \* \* called, and Willy asked me to obtain his opinion as to the duration of life. Looking at the time-table, and considering the hindrance likely to have arisen in Martin's immediate answer to the summons, it was considered scarcely likely he could arrive in time. I told dear Willy the truth, and the last tears he was ever to shed trickled down his pale face. To my surprise and relief, however, he soon conquered the emotion, and said, “ I thought so ; but it is all love. ‘ God is love.’ ”

On hearing his cousin go down-stairs he said, “ Is A—— going back to Mrs. K—— ? If so, tell him to take a message. I was vexed with her to-day, and I said unkind things for a few minutes to Miss Smith, about her inconsideration in keeping you from me ; but I know she loves you, mamma, and I should not like to die without telling her this, and assuring her that they are all kind thoughts now.”

He continued to talk at intervals, especially of his absent brother, sending yet other messages to him to enter at once on the service of Christ, adding, “ Let me see all the children when they get up ; my

time is very short. Be happy about Ernest; he is not more trouble than I was. Give him now all the spare love; he will repay it, mamma. Try the law of kindness. Do get him out of the notion that he is particularly troublesome. I had it once, and it made me worse; it made me reckless. To call a child always naughty, takes away all ambition to be good."

His papa now came in, and while I went to lie down for half an hour Willy asked for the 23rd Psalm; but not being able to bear a candle near the bed, it was repeated to him. "It is but the *shadow* of death, dear Willy," his papa said; "not death itself." After a few moments he replied, "It is *LIFE* to me. Ah, this happy night, papa! and how I have dreaded the time when I should know I was dying! It is the happiest night of my life. When I heard the bell toll last night, I wondered if the person who had just died were as happy as I. I hope I shall see you all in heaven, dear papa. I suppose it could not make our joy less to miss any that we love, and yet I do think it would make it more to see you all there; however I shall see *Jesus*."

When I returned, he spoke cheerfully of the happy half-hour alone with his dear father.

As he lay waiting in silence, patiently and meekly submitting to the will of his heavenly



Father, a bell rang. His eye, as well as his voice, asked, "Can that be Martin?" It was even so: and a light passed over the dying face that seemed to restore to it a measure of life; such a gleam of brightness as could only have been called to life by the fraternal love, which was truly "strong as death."

"Oh, Martin! Martin!" said Willy, as he stretched out his wasted arms to welcome his brother; "I never was quite so happy in all my life. I have had a happy night, and this is a happy morning."

The brothers were left alone. The two loving hearts, which from early infancy had rejoiced in each other's joys and wept for one another's griefs, met once more, and Willy's dying words will never be forgotten, I believe, nor their effect pass away, so long as life lasts. A tender committal of his mother to his dutiful love; a solemn entreaty to Martin to enlist under the banner of Christ, to give himself heart and soul to His service; a charge not to be ashamed of Jesus, were the subjects of Willy's conversation that morning. It seemed now that the last link to earth was severed. He lay still and at peace, and when I returned to him he said, "It is all well now. God does answer prayer. I am ready for death."

## CHAPTER X.

PARTING WORDS—BROTHERLY COUNSEL—CLOUDS AT SUNSET—  
THE LAST GLEAM—"THANK GOD, I BELIEVE!"

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"Knowing as I am known,  
How shall I love that word,  
And oft repeat before the throne,  
'For ever with the Lord!'"



## CHAPTER X.

FEARING the exhaustion which would follow such earnest conversation, I took my place beside Willy's bed, and requested to be left alone with him while the family breakfast was preparing, and Miss Smith went to get a few minutes' rest and refreshment. He seemed pleased to be quite alone with me again, affectionately remarked on my looking tired and unwell, and said he should give me in special charge to A——, to cure. "I have already given you in charge to Him who will be your great safety in sorrow, my dear mamma," he said. "Jesus will be near you whenever you go to Him. I have been praying constantly for you. I think I know just what your dangers and trials, and some of your temptations, are. The same remedy will do for all. Live near to God. Cling close to Christ; He will help you: His grace is sufficient." He then adverted very delicately to many little matters, both in reference to myself and others. Difficulties on reli-

gious subjects, which he had perceived to excite anxiety as well as the daily trials and chafes of a busy mother's life. Of these he spoke so sensibly, and with so much judgment as well as kindness, that I could not but express my surprise at his accurate observation of my temperament. "Ah," he said, "it is not very wonderful: your life has been so woven with mine, I could not but know almost your inmost thoughts; and you are not very secretive after all. I can truly say, for a long time past you have been but little out of my thoughts, mamma; and I have been so very anxious for you, that for the last few days my thoughts for you have all been prayers."

"And when I miss you everywhere, as I know I shall do, and feel it hard to go about my duties, what can I do, dear Willy, but mourn?"

"Yes, so it seems now, and I dare say will be at first; but one step at a time. One by one, duties will be made easy. You will find, as your day, so your strength will be. Don't feed grief; don't keep looking at things which belonged to me, and trying to recall old times, and keeping me before your eyes continually. It is not in that way wounds get healed. Rather think of the holy, happy place where I am; and think of Jesus, without whom I should have been lost."

After a short rest he said, "I have been talking to Martin about you. I trust he will be a good son. It is useless to talk of taking my place. To do that he must be helpless and sick, as I have been ; but Jesus will fill that place, and He has left you five of your children. One thing I want to tell you, dear mamma : you must not look for exactly my sort of love. Ours is a love which has come out of circumstances. Both Martin and Ernest, I believe, will be good sons to you ; but you must remember they are healthy boys, and boy-like ; and you won't be to them 'the everything' that you have been to me. My pursuits have kept me with you so much more than theirs can do. Besides, though you have not loved me better, my illness has brought out your special tenderness to me and mine to you ; it has made me more *daughter-like*. Some people think so much of the way of showing love ; perhaps you do a little. But, oh, there are plenty to love you. Papa and you must sustain one another. He is out a great deal, but one thing should comfort you when you feel lonely ; you are helping God's work in making it easy for him to leave home, if you take care of the children and train them well. Oh, you have many blessings ; look at these rather than at my loss. A—— will be a help to you. He has been a wise doctor and a good friend to me, so he will be to you.

Oh, how I do pray for him, that he may never in his practice lose the freshness of his first love to God. I can quite understand the trials and temptations of medical men, but what an important profession it is! May God keep him unspotted from the world! The nearer he lives to God, the better doctor he will make; and then, what a comfort he can be to his patients in mind as well as body! Now, don't forget in your sorrow to follow his advice. You have trusted *me* to him; you may trust yourself, I think, now. My love to W——, too. I often remember his kindness. I could not speak to him last week as I wished; but tell him my dying wish for him is, that he may be kept from the evil of the world."

He then alluded gratefully to many dear friends,—his first governess, Anne Ewing, who was even then lying on her death-bed; his dear aunts, especially Mrs. H. M——, and her husband, with great tenderness. He spoke of the former with a sweet smile, and said, "She used to call me Cato the Censor. I see what she meant. I was dogmatical, and censorious; I know I was a disagreeable child. It was a wrong spirit, mamma. I am very sorry for this; warn my brothers and sisters against it. Dear mamma, forgive me so far as I have shown it to you. The whole map of my life, with all its failings, seems unrolled before me."

“ Ah, God does all things well,” he said, after a pause. “ How disappointed I was because God had not taken me last night ! and if I had had my wish, I should not have seen Martin.

“ I am tired—so tired ; but I shall soon rest in Christ. Oh, mamma, the thought of the ‘ rest that remaineth ’ has often consoled me, so let it you.”

In consequence of an early message to the Vicarage, Mr. Pollock was by his bedside soon after eight o'clock. The interview was short, but satisfactory. He expressed no raptures, but a calm, holy joy in the Lord. Indeed he was so rapidly sinking that there was less power of expression, and the flow of utterance was a little checked by an increase of bodily suffering and a return of the cough, which had ceased. But it was a death-bed of faith and peace, a perfect rest upon the word of the covenant. No one could doubt the power of the Gospel who looked on that dying boy in the near prospect of death. The eye of the minister of Christ, accustomed as it was to the scenes of closing life, rested hopefully upon the earnest face, which the hand of death had already marked, and there was no need to ask if he were satisfied.

The farewell words were spoken, the last prayer was offered, and they parted : the child was about to enter his home above, the minister was yet to labour



and to pray awhile on earth. As he left the room, Willy said to me,—“It is not so very sad to part with those whom we are sure to see again so soon. It is where I have any doubt that I can scarcely bear it.”

Some one present remarked in his hearing, what a happy change the next few hours would, in all probability, bring about—the exchange of a suffering life of many privations for the safety and happiness of heaven !

He caught the words and said, “I do not like to hear my life spoken of as one of trial. Some trials I have had, certainly ; but, on the whole, it has been a very happy one. If I have had some privations, I have had fewer temptations than many boys. After all, I believe, it has been a happier boyhood than most. I don’t remember any moderate wish ungratified, and I have had such pleasant companionship and friendship with papa and mamma, that it has been more than made up. Such love they have had ! such patience ! God has dealt gently with me all along. So little severe illness or pain, and my prayer answered that I might not have to lie in bed long. Tears, mamma ? Oh, don’t weep ! I don’t regret life ; but even now, when I see your tears, I wish I could stay a little longer. Come here, dear mamma,” and, with a long embrace, he

whispered, “*Jesus* pities you. Some people may think you mourn too much for a helpless boy like me, but Christ knows your trial. He looks at it as it is. He can comfort you. Don’t lose sight of Him. Suppose now,” he added, tenderly, “I had to be soothed and prepared—suppose I was in terror because not prepared—no friend in Jesus—what an awful thing it would be! But Christ is really here, making my bed in my sickness, carrying me so gently through the valley; and, oh, the river is not so *very* dark! I can catch the light on the other side. It is so real, the presence of Christ; it is next to seeing Him. Ah, it is no *idea*, no mere notion, the presence of Christ. And what joy to think that I am about to see Him as He is!”

The children came in one by one to see him. He spoke very tenderly to Ernest, thanked him for his kindness to him, and asked him earnestly to apply to the great work of religion. He told him to love Christ, who had so loved him, and with a parting kiss said, “I hope to see you again in heaven. There is but one way.” To his little sister he was too much exhausted to say much; but he bade little Agnes strive against her self-will, and told her that when he was a little boy he used to think he could conquer his temper without help, but he found he must pray as well as strive, and strive as

well as pray. Little Frank was brought in, but Willy could scarcely bear to look at him, and closing his eyes said, "It is too much, mamma; take him away." He bade the faithful nurse of the children a kind farewell, and sent a few messages to the absent; and then, seeming weary, he slept for a short time. His cousin remained with him during the family breakfast, and giving him his baptismal gift, the Service he so greatly valued, he committed his mother to his kind and constant care. When he was gone Willy said, "It is all finished; I have only to die." Whilst I was bathing his temples with Eau de Cologne he referred to the sufferings of Christ. "'They gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall;' no loving hands to help Him," he said: "and this for us men, and our salvation! Sin caused the suffering. Sometimes, I fear, I have not been so sorry for sin as some people have been; but it would be wrong to trust in such a feeling, even if I had. That would not save me.

' All for sin could not atone,  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.'

It is well to be stripped of everything.

' Just as I am, without one plea.'

Say this, dear mamma." It seemed to soothe him, and I also repeated Montgomery's hyun,—

" For ever with the Lord ! "

“Mamma,” he said, “that text will comfort you. It might almost be put on my tombstone. I wish only for a text. Nothing about *me*. Such things seem out of place on a grave.”

The morning passed less tranquilly. His cough returned with some violence, and severe pain in the chest came on. He was becoming restless and distressed when his father returned, and on hearing his voice Willy said, “I am so glad, so thankful: I was afraid you would be alone, mamma; and I know I have great deal to pass through to-day: but now remember what you have often told me, that Christ does not change as *we* change, and that it will not be any proof that He has left me if I do not enjoy His presence. While Lucy S—— is here, go and lie down and rest. Get ready, too, you know what I mean,—get strength. Just say me my Collect first: ‘O God, who seest that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves!’ Ah, that will do for both of us now!” I kissed him, and as he still held my hand fast I did not like to leave him, but he added, “Yes, *go*, and don’t be very long: I shall soon want you. I may not long be conscious. I feel a dulness in my thoughts, but the work is all done—the great work, I mean.” He followed me with a loving look to the door, and I left him, intending to make my absence as short as

wait and pray, as we responded to his remark,—  
“Only the work of God can help us!”

But, pause here. Let no young reader question the faith of the dying boy—his simple, genuine faith. Bodily suffering, indeed, might dim for a few moments the clear, spiritual vision, so that he lost conscious sight of Jesus. But Jesus had not lost sight of Willy. He loved him with an everlasting love, and watched by the furnace as the Refiner of gold and silver. It was “well with the child,” and, perhaps, this last lesson in Christ’s school was his best. We are sure of one thing, that it was needed.

He had been basking, as it were, even on his death-bed, in the sunshine of God’s love, in the strong consolation of the presence of the Three in One. He had lain—to use his own expression—all night long at the gate of heaven, only waiting for the opening of that gate which was to lead to the unseen joys of the home prepared. On the banks of the swelling river of Jordan he had caught the light on the other side, and was strengthened. Few had been his temptations, few his soul conflicts, but now the loving Saviour suffered His child to walk a step or two without feeling His presence, ere He took him to His bosom for ever.

Perhaps, too, God had a lesson in view for those watchers by the death-bed. They had rejoiced with especial thankfulness in the calm and holy joy, the atmosphere of peace and love, which surrounded the dying boy. Even in the night of weeping there was the triumph of faith, and they might have triumphed in his victory, as though it had been wrought by an arm of flesh. But He who knew the human heart suffered the joy of the child to be clouded, the faith to darken, and the pitiful cry to arise in that solemn hour, “ I cannot *see* Jesus ! ”

What then ? Was Jesus the less there ? Surely not. The Saviour’s teachings sank into the hearts of all ; and they were stilled in His presence. He taught them that the child who had been, as it were, half inspired with elevated holy and spiritual thoughts, wrapped in close communion with the Father and the Son, strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, was still a *sinner* ; that no words, however holy ; no thought, however elevated ; no knowledge, however clear ; could afford a standing ground of comfort or safety in the hour of death. It was to be the Spirit’s last lesson to our child—a lesson wrung out of his soul’s anguish, “ Only believe ! ” For now the voice which had been to him “ music and sweetness,” failed to cheer. The mother could no longer comfort. Bodily pain was

given him to bear in no slight measure, for he described it as "agony." Vain and grievous were the attempts to relieve the burdened lungs; and piteous the cries for help, for permission to sit up, if only to get breath for a moment.

The prayers for strength, echoed by aching, loving hearts, were heard. The calming presence of his medical attendant, who very soon was at his side, seemed our first answer. He meekly consented to lie down, and await the final struggle. The restless desire to rise subsided into a calm, not of this world. He lay still on his pillow. The pale lips were raised for the last time to the mother's weeping face, as, pointing up, he whispered, "*Jesus!*" It was his farewell to her, and giving her another loving kiss, with the words, "Once more!" he motioned to her to leave him.

He had told her in the morning not to wish his life, and referred to the Irish superstition, which he could almost understand, of death being harder in a mother's arms because of the wish, which nothing could prevent, in the mother's heart; and he said it would feel hard to him to know that she wanted to detain his spirit. So he gave his hand to his father, and we knelt around in silence.

It was not a lonely silence; the Comforter was with him. "The river is dark," he said, "and I do

not see the other side, but Christ is there ;” and as his breath became shorter and shorter, his father’s ear distinctly caught his last emphatic confession of faith as it came from his dying lips—that confession with which the army of apostles, prophets, and martyrs, have yielded up their lives. With all the confidence of a soul reconciled to God, and resting only on the finished work of Christ, he cried, “*Thank God, I BELIEVE!*”

The heart ceased to beat a moment after. The struggle of the young life was ended ; clouds and darkness had passed away for ever ; Willy’s longed-for rest was come ; the faithful servant had entered into the joy of his Lord. He was gone home to Jesus. Better than any expression of earthly love was this last word of our child ; dearer to the parents’ memory than any word of tenderness or earthly clinging, were those few words of trust and faith—“*Thank God, I believe!*”

He died in the afternoon of the 3rd of November, 1858, aged sixteen years and six months. He lies buried in the churchyard of Bowdon ; with the words selected by himself graven on his tombstone, “*Ever with the Lord.*”

A letter, kindly written by the Rev. W. Pollock, will suitably close this chapter :—



“ DEAR MRS. GELDART,

“ I gladly accede to your wish in supplying you with a few recollections of your dear boy.

“ It was on a Sunday afternoon, in our old Parish Church, as he slowly passed down the aisle amidst the departing congregation, that I first remember to have observed him. I was at once struck with his aspect. It was not only that he was plainly a child of suffering, whom it was impossible to regard without sympathy, were it but for the cross which he had been born to bear ; there was also a chastened seriousness in his expression, and there were lines of thought upon his brow, which somehow assured me on the moment that he had not been permitted to drink a bitter cup in vain. I inquired after the stranger from the officials of the Church, but he was unknown. A Sunday or two afterwards, however, he reappeared, to renew the impressions which he had made upon me ; and then, in the course of a few days, I received your request that I should visit him.

“ He received me with a certain air of reserve, which was probably constitutional ; but at the same time with an ease which bespoke a maturity of character greatly in advance of his years. My instructions were moulded accordingly, not so much for the comprehension of a boy, as for the higher capacities of a man ; and I was rejoiced to find that the spiritual development was scarcely less than the intellectual, and that there existed a marked readiness

for the 'going on unto perfection'—an eager thirst for such knowledge as would embrace the highest sustainments and deepest mysteries of the faith. It is not necessary, nor have I the time at my command, to enter at length into the details of this visit, or of those which succeeded it. Suffice it to say, that whatever Scripture I read to him, I found that all his interest still centred in a living Saviour; and that I manifestly reached his affections and his conscience in exact proportion as I was enabled to bring down Christ before him, in His fulness, His perfections, His power, His love, His faithfulness.

“I remember well that he seemed greatly struck by the simple grandeur of that Divine arrangement, by which the sinner's sin was once laid on Christ, and He died beneath the guilty load; and now the righteousness of Christ again is passed to the account of the sinner, and he lives thereby for ever. I remember, too, that he seemed deeply moved when I dwelt on that wondrous development of the incarnation, Christ 'learning obedience by the things which He suffered.' It seemed as if the sufferer before me had found a new point of sympathy with the Beloved, a new realisation of his own portion in Him, as a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. It seemed as if he felt that he had become possessed of a new power in wrestling through his own conflicts, when he saw the Master Himself,

‘even though He were a Son,’ a learner in the discipline of sorrow.

“ For the rest, his end was in perfect harmony with antecedents such as these. We saw the outward man daily perishing ; but we saw also that the inward man was being renewed day by day. His demeanour was calm, and almost wholly undemonstrative ; but there was no doubting the steadfastness of his hope, the strength of his consolation, his joy and peace in believing. His faith was of the simplest order ; and, as always happens when it is so, it was clear and assured proportionately. One word of Holy Writ settled everything to his convictions ; and as regarded his soul’s welfare, Christ was all in all. And thus he passed away. You have told me, indeed, of a moment’s sinking in the deep waters. But it was only for a moment. As far certainly as my observation went, there were ‘ no bands in his death.’ I never read with greater comfort than over his quiet resting-place our exquisite office for the departed. I have never felt more disposed to say, than in my recollection of him, ‘ So He giveth His beloved sleep ! ’

“ I am, my dear Mrs. Geldart,

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ WM. POLLOCK.

“ Bowdon Vicarage, Feb. 9th, 1860.”

## **CHAPTER XI.**

**LESSONS FROM WILLY'S HISTORY.**



## CHAPTER XI.

WHEN I was noting down the record of the last few weeks of Willy's life, he once asked me on what I was engaged. "Are you writing down what I say?" he asked, with his usual openness and simplicity. I replied in the affirmative, when he said, "It seems vanity to say so ; but if you ever intend to write anything about me when I am gone, do take care and be faithful. It is very likely, dear mamma, that a *true* story of the trials and temptations of a sick child may be useful to some other young person tried as I have been. If there is any chance of that, I should not mind ; but, remember, do not put me before the grace of God in me. Not," he added, "that there will be so much danger as in the case of a naturally amiable child, but there is always a tendency to think more of the creature than the Creator."

We read sometimes, in Christian biography especially, statements of religious attainments and experience which, in comparison with our own low standard of spiritual knowledge, seem, by their very contrast, to damp and discourage. The foregoing sketch will, at least, be clear of this defect. It is a true history of the trials, and, we may add, the triumph, of a common child; one, as has been shown, not extraordinarily gifted, either with mental or moral endowments. His disposition far from amiable, with a natural besetment of pride, perhaps unusually strong. Nor did the grace of God, which was eminently bestowed on him, at once or entirely efface the marks of the inherited corruption. He would have told you of many a fall into fretfulness and impatience, of many a little ungrateful return for love and gentleness, of many an act which his intimate knowledge of his own heart pronounced selfish—a quick, impatient, and sometimes disrespectful manner towards his elders, fostered unconsciously by his mother's close and familiar intercourse—the intercourse of confidence and friendship.

All this he would wish those to know who have followed him through the stages of his short and tried pilgrimage to the gates of the Celestial City; and he would have you know it, because, as he once said, in

reference to Christian biography, "If but we forget the man, and look on all the good he did as God's work in him, such reading does good; but, unfortunately, we too often forget that, and do not give God the glory."

Read Willy's simple history, then, with this in view. He was just a sinful, erring child, like any of you; but saved by the faith of Christ, the Holy Spirit subdued the strength of his many natural corruptions. He was earnest, too, in the fight. When once enlisted in the Saviour's cause, he did not let his armour rust for want of use. He watched and prayed. He was eminently a child of prayer. Many a time boys and girls of Willy's age rise from their sound slumber, perhaps from a night of unbroken repose, and hurry down to breakfast, without one thought of bending the knee to the Great Guardian of their dark hours, who has kept them safe from evil. They find the room too cold, or the want of food too pressing, to begin their day with God. There was a place in Willy's chamber, hallowed now by fond recollection, that was consecrated to earnest prayer. Alone with God, he used, notwithstanding bodily infirmity, and increasing weakness, to kneel in His presence; and not the worst night, or the ceaseless morning cough



—extending often over three hours—could relax his habit of prayer to God in secret.

Often has the anxious attendant stood waiting at his door, fearful of the fatigue consequent on prolonged kneeling, and knowing his need of refreshment; but it seemed always to us, that the weaker his body, the more earnest and frequent was his intercourse with God; the more ill and suffering he became, the more he prayed and watched unto prayer. It was one secret of his success in overcoming evil,—this prayerful spirit. If you would live and die as Willy did, you must pray as he prayed. It was his habitual communion which brought him habitual help from God, and was the means of his strength in weakness, his consolation in suffering and trial. “Jesus is no stranger to me,” he said, when death was at hand. He knew in whom he had believed.

He had great reverence for God’s word, and he found it a strong tower, to which he ran and was safe; never doubting when he read of a truth there; never cavilling when he found it was the will of God. Thus, when on his dying bed he craved for words of comfort, he always responded most heartily to words from the Book of Truth. It was “a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path,”

cheering many a restless night and weary day, and strengthening his soul in the last hour of life.

To the afflicted and sick ones of our English homes and hearths these brief memorials are offered, with special tenderness and sympathy. Fain would Willy, could he speak, comfort you “with the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God.” He would bid you take your burden—of which only you can tell the weight—to Christ, and He will bear it for you ; for surely He who bore Willy’s sin, and carried his sorrow, will receive yours if you ask Him. He would tell you to carry that weary weight of irritability and discontent to the Saviour, and find, as he found, that in the hour of need Christ will give His help and grace. The selfishness which you are conscious is creeping over you, He will strengthen you by His own holy example to overcome ; for of Him it is written, that “He pleased not Himself.” The dark thoughts at night, when sleep will not come, and temptations and doubts are ready to assail, he would ask you to confide to the dear Saviour, who, while He is God to help, is man to sympathize—“In that He suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” And, above all, he would entreat you, constrained by the love of Jesus, to flee unto

Him for salvation, and to find Him "all in all," ere the hour of death shall come. Happy, then, to lay aside his weary body, and to utter with the same unshaken confidence as he did, out of the heart's depths, "Thank God, I believe!"

THE END.





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